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No. 56
February 1998

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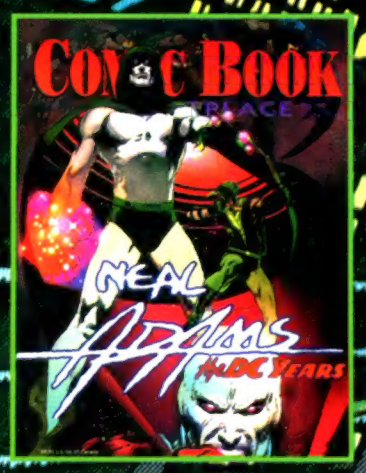

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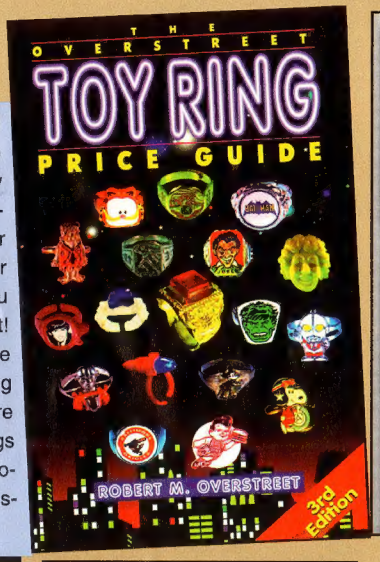

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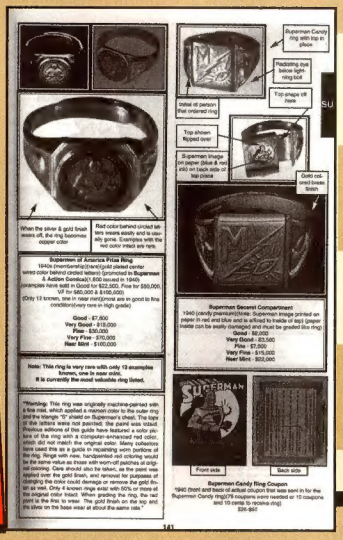

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CONTENTS

NUMBER 56 Feb. 1998

Volume 2 • Number 56
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DEPARTMENTS

Letter from the Editor 4

Marketplace Mail 5

Advertising Info. 6

Subscription Service 6

Coming Next Issue 8

Back Issues 75

Market Reports 76

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FEATURES

The Shadow... from Silver to Bronze!
Part II of the Shadow's Comic Book History! by Todd Severin **10**

Denny O'Neil – Writer on the Storm!
He knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men! by Bob Brodsky & Kevin Hanley **12**

Neal Adams... The DC Years!
The artist who changed comics forever! by Arlen Schumer **16**

COLUMNS

Adv. Into Weird Words
Hybrid Horror!
by Pat S. Calhoun **7**

Nolan's Notebook
Those Tough-To-Find 1950's DCs!
by Michelle Nolan **9**

CBM Forum
When was the Bronze Age anyway?
by Sterling Dashiell **80**

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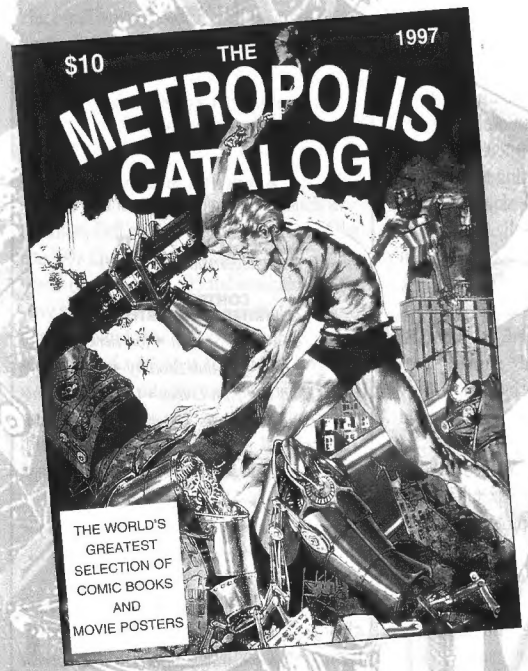

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Remembering Mom Kirby...

Roz Kirby died December 22 at the age of 75. I last saw her at the AACC dinner during the 1997 San Diego Con. As always she was pleasant and cordial to every collector in attendance. As she was wheelchair-bound in her later years, attending was always a bit of a challenge for her... but it never stopped her from accepting her annual honorary invitation. Her presence added so much to the dinner that I can hardly imagine one without her.

Since her passing, I've been reflecting on some of the times I got to spend with the Kirbys. Like many who grew up with the early convention scene of the '60s, and '70s, I treasured the moments when I got to chat with Jack and Roz. At every convention they were not only polite and pleasant to the throngs of fans that "hounded" their every move, they were genuinely kind as well. I personally observed dozens of situations where another con celebrity might have been gruff or insensitive to overly enthusiastic and sometimes pestering fans... but not the Kirbys! They always put in extra time and energy to accommodate fans... even to the point of their own exhaustion.

I recall one occasion when Jack and Roz were the featured convention guests here on the West Coast. The line for their table wound around the entire room, clear out of the convention hall, up the stairs and out the exit door! It took the Kirbys all morning, all afternoon, and into the evening to meet and greet each fan. They never once complained, skipping meals and talking with admirers until Jack was actually hoarse.

Toward the end of that incredibly long line was a young fan clutching his amateur "tribute drawings" of Kirby characters. This lad had no idea how exhausted the Kirbys were... but Jack and Roz knew how long this boy had waited to show Jack his work. Hardly able to talk, Jack (with Roz still at his side) met the young fan with that famous Kirby smile... even taking the time to comment on every one of the dozens of drawings in the lad's folder. After watching this arduous effort, I was even more impressed with the couple's kindness and patience than I was with their fame.

Many years later, I interviewed Jack for the *Overstreet World of Comics* video. I didn't know it at the time, but that on-camera interview would be Jack's last. It was a bitter-sweet experience for me as Jack was obviously quite ill. Roz was loving and protective of him during the process, even shielding his eyes from the bright lights as the camera rolled. Tears came to my eyes on several occasions during the interview as I watched her lovingly support him when he was unable to stand on his own. After about 30 minutes she whispered in my ear "Jack's very tired now... could we continue another time?" But there wasn't another time, as her life-long partner passed away a few months after that.

But it's important to note that Rosalind Goldstein Kirby is, in her own right, a true comic book legend. Not only did she continue her role as "surrogate mother" for the army of baby boomers that remained devoted Kirby fans over the years, she also proudly continued her late husband's legacy right up to the last.

I join her four children... Susan, Neal, Lisa, and Barbara... in mourning her passing. So long Mom Kirby... you'll be missed...

Gary

Gary M. Carter, Editor

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I love this magazine

Having just devoured my first issue of CBM (#54), I had to let you know how much I enjoyed it. The feature stories are great with their in-depth analysis of each subject, and the use of color is a welcome relief to the too-common black and white appearance of most comic publications. I am just getting back into the comic book hobby after a fifteen year absence; your magazine will be helpful as I begin to familiarize myself with the market.

I noticed from my first issue that you tend to talk a lot about Marvel and DC. Do you ever do features on the lesser known brands such as Charlton, Dell, and Gold Key? I'm a fan of the late '60's Charlton titles, Captain Atom and Blue Beetle (the Ditko series), and would love to see a story about Charlton Comics of that era. More than any other, that time period seemed to be something of a "Golden Age" at the company as it tried to break into the mainstream superhero comic market. Has anyone else ever requested this topic? I know I can't be the only one who appreciates these underrated comics!

Thanks again for such a great magazine. I'm already looking forward to my next issue.

Monty Montgomery, Texas

Gotta know!

Just got to get your opinion on a matter that is driving me nuts! I have a first issue of a 56-page comic fanzine titled: Comic Book Marketplace (March 1991). This sample issue was sent to me. Did you people buy out this publication later or did you put a "copy cat" out of business?! I gotta know! By the way, CBM #53, "DC's Tangled Roots" by Will Murray was terrific. Great skull cover. Those pulp cover reprints—great, too.

Norral Johnson, Oregon

You have a copy of CBM #1 that was produced as a "prototype" comic adzine by Lisa and I. Sample issues were sent only to Bruce Hamilton's mailing list and most were tossed in the trash upon receipt. Although there were no articles in #1 (save a letter from Pat Calhoun) the issue has now become rather collectible among hardcore CBM fans and a copy recently sold for $125! Wish I had a box full… but hind sight is always 20/20!

Better than your age?

My compliments on CBM #55. The Fawcett coverage was long overdue and I hope maybe we'll see some more in the near future. Joseph Kary's "Superman vs. The Big Red Cheese" feature was very, very interesting, but the ending really hacked me off.

Why is it that so many Golden Age and Silver Age collectors feel the compulsion to attack the present incarnations of the characters they discuss? I cannot tell you the amount of frustration this parochial outlook engenders. It chases away younger collectors who are beginning to discover the classics. The number of people interested in Golden Age and Silver Age books can only shrink if new fans are not brought into the fold. By telling these potential new fans the material that first attracted them to a specific character is bad just because it is new, we're only sounding the death knell of appreciation, information and love for the classics. And of all characters to whine about, Captain Marvel, Jerry Ordway's graphic novel The Power of Shazam! is perhaps the gentlest, most loving update of a character ever done. The on-going series of the same name has brought Spy Smasher, Rocketman and many others to a whole new audience, but it has done so incorporating as much of their original spirit as possible.

As you know, each issue of CBM presents an amazing wealth of history which could possibly otherwise be lost forever. But if fans and scholars can't build up what they like without lowering the debate to "my Age is better than your Age," perhaps there is no hope that the classics will even be remembered in the future. I know I'm in the incredibly small minority comfortable with old material and new alike, but enough is enough.

Jeff Vaughn, Maryland

Monster story

I was happy to read in issue #53 that you are working on another Marvel pre-hero story. I was lucky enough to even find CBM #21 when it came out… it has been my guide to collecting pre-hero ever since. I had even heard the original article was longer than what was published.

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I can add another book to the list, Two Gun Kid #58, from Feb 61. It has a really neat Kirby monster story with, as always, a neat twist in the story line. I am still looking for a copy of Kid Colt Outlaw #100, which also has a monster story.

Mark King, Georgia

Everett, Kirby...?

Regarding the Daredevil article in CBM #54... Let's take a closer look at the cover to Daredevil #1. Is it an absolute fact that Bill Everett did the cover art? With the exception of the lower right versions of Matt Murdock, Karen Page, and Foggy Nelson, it sure looks like a Jack Kirby layout to me. Perhaps Kirby did the pencils and Everett did the inking...?

The figure of Daredevil leaping over the heads of the five gangsters looks very much to be pencilled by Kirby with the possible exception of the guy in the green suit which looks like Everett's inking (perhaps pencils, too).

Any opinions on this latest controversy?

John Mlachnik, Minnesota

Prepare to nod off

Are you bored hearing compliments about your magazine? If so, prepare to nod off. It's a mini-event here in Texas when we rush to either Richard Evans at Bedrock Comics or Glen Kessler at Happy Trails to buy our copies. Sometimes Dan Bennett picks up a copy and delivers it to me. Dan, a hamburger and fries would hit the spot with the good read.

Congratulations to Richard Evans on his election as President of the American Association of Comicbook Collectors (AACC). Richard, where's my twenty bucks?

I always look forward to pieces on Mile Highs written by Pat Kochanek. His articles are always entertaining and he almost always nails the ambiguous, and suddenly the truth is obvious although I have one comment; Pat, Mile Highs are only objects; they are not living things. Still on second thought, I could be wrong.

The article on Leading Comics (CBM #45) was well done. Omitted, however, was that Leading #1 is the first cover appearance of Green Arrow and Speedy and all the others except Star Spangled Kid and maybe Crimson Avenger. I enjoy CBM.

Joe Smejkal, Texas

3/4 covers

Just wanted to drop you a line to tell you how much I enjoy your publication. CBM articles are informative and fun!

Tell me, have you ever considered doing an article on 3/4 cover comics? I know most people consider 3/4 cover material to be worthless, but as a barometer of the comics medium I think they're fascinating! I'd like to see an article that explained (a) who came up with the idea in the first place (b) when did the practice begin and end, and (c) what happened to all of the 1/4 cover pieces that were returned.

If you print this letter, could you please leave in this "Hi" to my cousin, Bruce Bergeron. He's a regular CBM reader! Thanks!

Dave Fontaine, Massachusetts

Astro Boy

Was wondering if you could help me. I am looking for an issue of Astro Boy. It was around the time of Speed Racer, the late '60s, early '70s. I don't know who publishes it. Anything you could find on this would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Danette Browne via Email

I believe the comic book that you're referring to is Astro Boy *#1 (Aug 1965, 12¢) published by Gold Key. It is considered by most collectors to be the first Japanese animation-based comic. A NM copy has sold for as high as $700, and so it is rather pricey. There is also* March Of Comics *#285 (which is the second appearance of Astro Boy). If it can be found, a VF to NM copy goes for about $200 or so.*

Sorry about the short letter col this month, Marketplace Mail will return to its regular length next issue, so don't miss it!

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Hybrid Horror!

By Pat S. Calhoun

For a brief while, from 1952 through mid-1954, the fantasy genres, including science fiction and horror, were the biggest force in the comic book marketplace. During this time span many different companies took a turn at packaging various titles with the "horror" look. This produced such subgenres as horror/crime, horror/western and horror/superhero. Publishers used a number of approaches to attract the multitudes of fans who were devouring all that fantastic, grisly, and grotesque four-color fiction.

Ken Shannon #3 (Feb. 1952) from Quality Comics, put an infusion of the spooky into the adventures of the crime-busting private eye, including a creepy cover where the hard-boiled Irishman meets "The Corpse That Wouldn't Sleep." The inside starts with the cover yarn, and Shannon introduces it thusly: "I figured it was just a routine case, good for a few quick bucks on a dismal night! A woman phoned and started screaming that her ex-husband was trying to break into her bedroom. But she forgot to mention that the guy... had been dead and buried for two months!" This is the kind of crime/horror where none of the events turn out to be really supernatural but remain explainable within Shannon's "realistic" contemporary setting. But it's fun, and Shannon's slangy banter is a fair parody of the classic prose PI's of the period.

The Shannon opener is followed by a five-page back-up, "Angles O'Day," that just barely succeeds in its humorous intent, despite being the work of the extremely-talented Jack Cole, of Plastic Man fame. But even when churning out such fodder Cole's "bigfoot" style has an engaging clarity.

Ken Shannon and his charming secretary, Dee Dee Dawson, are back in the third yarn, "The Case of the Butchered Butcher," which starts with Dee Dee offering to cook dinner for the two of them. They stop to buy steaks at Nick's Meat Market but get an order of murder thrown in with their beef after Nick is knifed. Shannon suspects that the mobster-run night club recently opened next door may be involved and goes over to have it out with the owner. When they bust into the hood's office, tension quickly builds to a brawl that includes Dee Dee taking on the mobster's moll in what used to be called a "cat fight." The story is modest in ambition and mechanical in execution, but this tale—like the other Shannon stories (and the cover)—is enhanced by the signs of master artist Reed Crandall that emerge through Quality's "house style" inking.

The book wraps up with a third Shannon story that's not a pseudo-horror yarn even though it does have a weird splash of a disembodied hand holding a knife. "One Day I'll Kill You" tells of a crook just out from a five-year prison term—seeking revenge on his wife, who tipped the cops after she saw him shoot somebody. Night-club singer Linda Lewis hires Shannon for protection, and Ken contrives a scheme to smoke out the would-be-murderer. It's a stock situation, resolved in a stock climax, but it still delivers as light entertainment.

The *Ken Shannon* title ran for ten issues (#6 has a superb vampire cover), and he also headlined *Police Comics* for the last three years of that anthology's run.

Jumbo Comics had a

Bill Everett and an unknown colorist created a marvelous, richly-textured evocation of "The Eye of Maru" on the cover of Men's Adventures #21 (May 1953). The crime-busting private eye tangles with the man who wouldn't die in Ken Shannon #3 (Feb 1952). Some earlier Shannon stories in Police Comics had horror covers as well.

simple way to attract the horror audience: they began cover-featuring the Ghost Gallery, a supernatural series that had been running since 1942. The first issue packaged with a horror cover was *Jumbo* #161 (July 1952). Sheena retained a strong cover presence, topping the stack of sidebar cameos on the left.

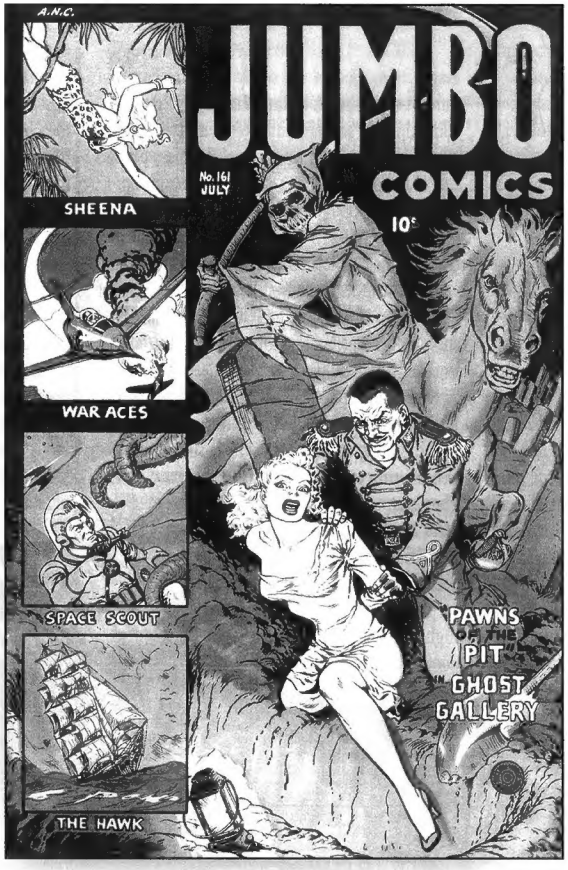
Ghost Gallery opens the book with a run-of-the-mill werewolf tale. The stories in this series sometimes were introduced by a narrator, sometimes Drew Murdoch actually participated in them, and—perhaps most often—the tales were self-contained and thus were early examples of the "short story" approach that would dominate the postwar and pre-Code years.

The "war" entry of this five-genre grab-bag anthology is a four-page biography of Baron Von Rictofen, the German "Red Baron" flying ace of World War I. Rictofen was the first flyer to mount a machine gun on his plane. The flamboyant Baron had eighty silver cups on his mantle to mark his eighty kills before being shot out of the sky.

The "science fiction" strip, Space Scout, is only a chapter in a continued story, but even so, manages to pack quite a bit of quaintly charming pseudo-futuristic gibberish into four pages.

Next up is the Hawk, that venerable pirate created by Will Eisner back in the 1930s. Despite perfunctory plotting, it's a colorful, compact, and enjoyable four-pager.

Fiction House's Queen of the Jungle closes the book; Sheena was the most important heroine of comics' Golden Age. Here, honed down to six pages, she still shines in this story of a crazed jungle tribe that worships a huge horrible idol where they plan on sacrificing a white woman that they've captured. Sheena figures out how to expose the witch doctor as a fraud and a liar and turn the tribe against him.



Maurice Whitman drew most of the Fiction House covers during the early 1950s, including Jumbo #161 (July 1952). The publisher left the comics field in 1954.

Atlas was thorough in their horror conversions: *Men's Adventures* had been a war title since issue #11, but #21 (May 1953) was the first of three full-fledged horror issues—indistinguishable from their many other fantasy mags. The death-dispensing deity on Bill Everett's classic cover is an awesome creation. And it aptly illustrates the title story, "The Eye of Maru," a solid weirdie set in the Malaysian jungle—where an evil white man tries to rob the natives of the treasure the idol guards. The story's impact is increased by Joe Sinnott's clean and intense art. The next tale is an utterly forgettable "anti-Commie yarn."

"The Secret of the Flying Saucer" is a hilarious three-pager (played totally straight) by Stan Lee and Fred Kida. Following that is a low-key crime drama. "The Silent One" is the finale, the story of a short and sizzling romance between a crook and a robot. This cybernetic chiller was also drawn by the prolific Kida, who gave it a good gritty mood.

Despite the added spice of the scary stuff, none of these three titles were destined for more than another seven issues.

Pat Calhoun and his family live in Santa Rosa, California. He has been collecting, researching and appreciating comic books since the early 1960s, and is a nationally recognized comic book historian.

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By Michelle Nolan

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SMACK!
WELL, I WAS ONLY STICKING TO THE FACTS, SUSIE
I WON A DOLL THE LAST TIME I WAS HERE!

If you are a determined collector of old comic books, you know the feelings. You know the obsessions. You know the frustrations. You know the joys.

If you've been collecting for any length of time—say, a decade or longer—you know how challenging it can be to complete a collection of, perhaps, 500 to 1,000 books that are 35 to 65 years old. Unless you are wealthy and/or have nothing else to do with your life, it takes a long, long time to acquire such a collection.

Believe me, I know.

Twenty years ago, after I had acquired maybe 1,000 DC comics from the 1940s and '50s including several hundred saved from my earliest collecting days in 1956-59—and had put the expensive ones like *Flash Comics* #92 in a safe deposit box—I decided I was hooked. I had to have all the issues from National Comics Publications that I had wanted but had never been able to obtain and/or save in my childhood.

Why? It was easy to rationalize. I love DC, especially everything from 1948 through the 1950s (in my opinion, the company's peak years were 1948-51). I have loved DC ever since I first picked one of them up in 1956.

So, I did all the research. I made out all the lists. I knew it would take a minimum of 10 years. I was under no illusions. But I made the psychological commitment: I must have every DC from that period except funny animals and war (which I also collect, but only at bargain rates, and to date I have amassed nearly two-thirds of those).

Wiser people told me I was crazy. Ye Editor, Gary Carter, shuddered at the task, since at the time even Gary—acknowledged worldwide as King of the DC Collectors—had not completed the job (I remember how pleased I was, circa 1983, to find a duplicate copy that he somehow still needed). In fact, Gary is the only collector I know with a complete set of 1948-59 DCs, not to mention all the earlier issues. (I stand in awe!)

Twenty years ago, I still needed more than 2,000 of those 1948-59 DCs, since the couple hundred issues I already had were dated 1939-47. The Holy Grail was the number 2,906, since that is exactly how many original newsstand DCs (other than funny animals and war) were published from 1948-59. (The 1953 3-D issues of *Superman* and *Batman* were reprints, so I didn't count them.)

The other day, *Here's Howie* #15 arrived in the mail from Steve Fishler of Metropolis Comics. It cost me all of $2.50 because it was only in fair condition. But you'll never know how grateful I was. I had been searching for *Here's Howie* #15 for 20 years, and I had never even seen one.

But finally finding *Here's Howie* #15 created an amazingly frustrating, empty feeling. As many of you know, one has to have spent many years putting together a long run, to truly understand.

Because I still need one DC.

One!

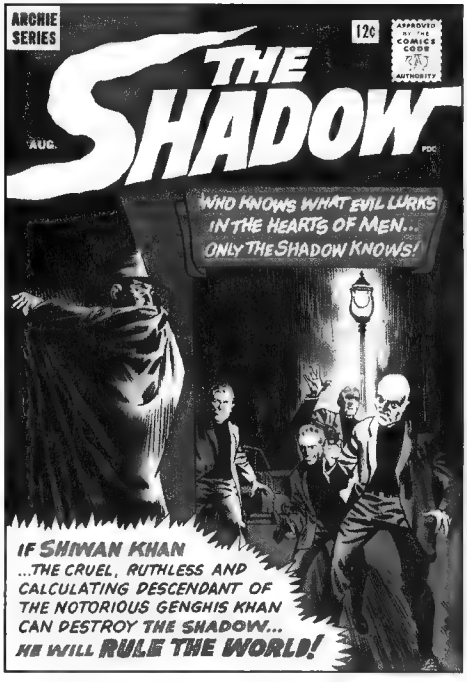
Can you imagine how frustrating this is? Can you imagine what it's like to be one DC away from completing a collection of 2,906 books and wondering if you'll ever find it? Of course you can… because if you're reading this you're an obsessed collector too!

And, irony of ironies, it is the cheapest of all 1950's DC comics. That's right—there isn't a cheaper 1950's book from that company (except for other late issues of the same title).

Anyone got a copy of *Buzzy* #70? I'll gladly pay 10x Guide for it!

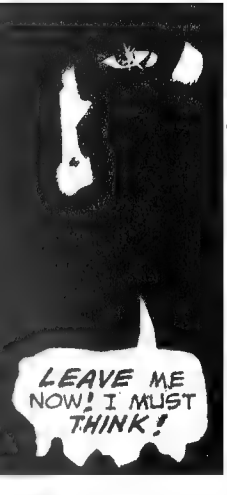
Of course, that still won't get you a steak dinner for two, because *Buzzy* #70 (March/April 1956) is valued at a whole $3.20 in Good condition!

But that's the last book I need. I'm now obsessed with finding *Buzzy* #70! (I know this might be fudging a little, using my column as a giant want ad, but I have a hunch that if anybody will understand, it *(continued on page 74)*


ARCHIE SERIES
12¢
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE SHADOW
AUG.
WHO KNOWS WHAT EVIL LURKS IN THE HEARTS OF MEN... ONLY THE SHADOW KNOWS!
IF SHIWAN KHAN ...THE CRUEL, RUTHLESS AND CALCULATING DESCENDANT OF THE NOTORIOUS GENGHIS KHAN CAN DESTROY THE SHADOW... HE WILL RULE THE WORLD!

The first Silver Age Shadow from Archie Comics (Aug 1964) recreated the Shadow as a combination of James Bond and a mystic. DC's Shadow #1 (Oct/Nov 1973, written by O'Neil and drawn by Kaluta) brought the character back to its original pulp glory of the 1930s.

SHADOW COMICS
FROM SILVER TO BRONZE



After the demise of the long running *Shadow Comics* in 1949, the Shadow made his next comic book appearance in a slightly altered form, and not in the pages of his own magazine. *Tales Calculated to Drive you Mad*, the satirical brainchild of Harvey Kurtzman and William Gains, publisher of EC Comics, was the home of the now-famous Shadow parody, the invisible Shadowskeedeeboomboom.

Kurtzman, who had previously made a name for himself with his pioneering work on EC's *Frontline Combat* and *Two-Fisted Tales*, found himself exhausted by the research he needed to do before writing each issue of his war comics. He decided that what he needed was a less demanding, more lucrative format for his creative talents and found that with satirical humor. *MAD* premiered in October 1953 on a bimonthly production schedule.

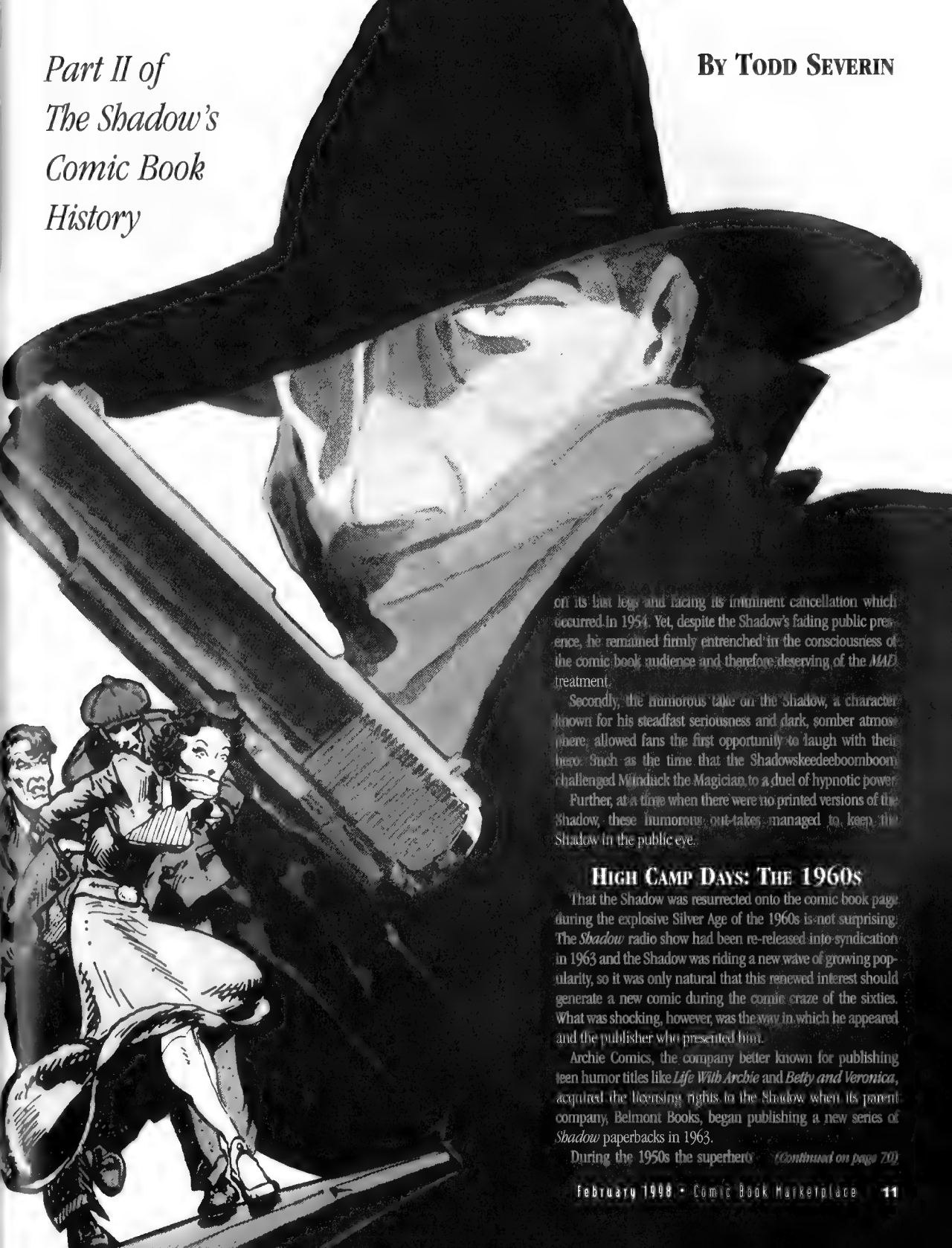
In the second issue of *MAD*, Kurtzman created Melvin, a take-off on Tarzan, that became his first parody of a specific comic character. Many character parodies followed, such as Superduperman, Mickey Rodent, Teddy and the Pirates, and of course, the Shadowskeedeeboomboom.

In the fourth issue of *MAD*, Margo Pain discovered that someone was out to kill her after many attempts on her life were unsuccessful. In typical *MAD* fashion, the murderer turned out to be none other than the Shadowskeedeeboomboom, who knocked her off because she was the only one who knew of his secret identity. The artwork on this feature was beautifully rendered by Will Elder, complete with thousands of hidden sight gags, beautiful women, and a Shadow depicted as a three foot tall, buck toothed midget.

While clearly not an important part of his legend, the Shadow's appearance in *MAD* is noteworthy on a couple of different fronts. First, given that both the *Shadow* pulp and the *Shadow* comic were discontinued in 1949, it is a testament to the popularity of the character that he was still found to be worthy of parody in 1953. By this time, the *Shadow* radio show was

Part II of The Shadow's Comic Book History

By Todd Severin



off its last legs and facing its imminent cancellation which occurred in 1954. Yet, despite the Shadow's fading public presence, he remained firmly entrenched in the consciousness of the comic book audience and therefore deserving of the *MAD* treatment.

Secondly, the humorous take on the Shadow, a character known for his steadfast seriousness and dark, somber atmosphere, allowed fans the first opportunity to laugh with their hero. Such as the time that the Shadowskeedeeboomboom challenged Mindjack the Magician to a duel of hypnotic power.

Further, at a time when there were no printed versions of the Shadow, these humorous out-takes managed to keep the Shadow in the public eye.

High Camp Days: The 1960s

That the Shadow was resurrected onto the comic book page during the explosive Silver Age of the 1960s is not surprising. The *Shadow* radio show had been re-released into syndication in 1963 and the Shadow was riding a new wave of growing popularity, so it was only natural that this renewed interest should generate a new comic during the comic craze of the sixties. What was shocking, however, was the way in which he appeared and the publisher who presented him.

Archie Comics, the company better known for publishing teen humor titles like *Life With Archie* and *Betty and Veronica*, acquired the licensing rights to the Shadow when its parent company, Belmont Books, began publishing a new series of *Shadow* paperbacks in 1963.

During the 1950s the superhero *(Continued on page 70)*

Denny O'Neil: Wr

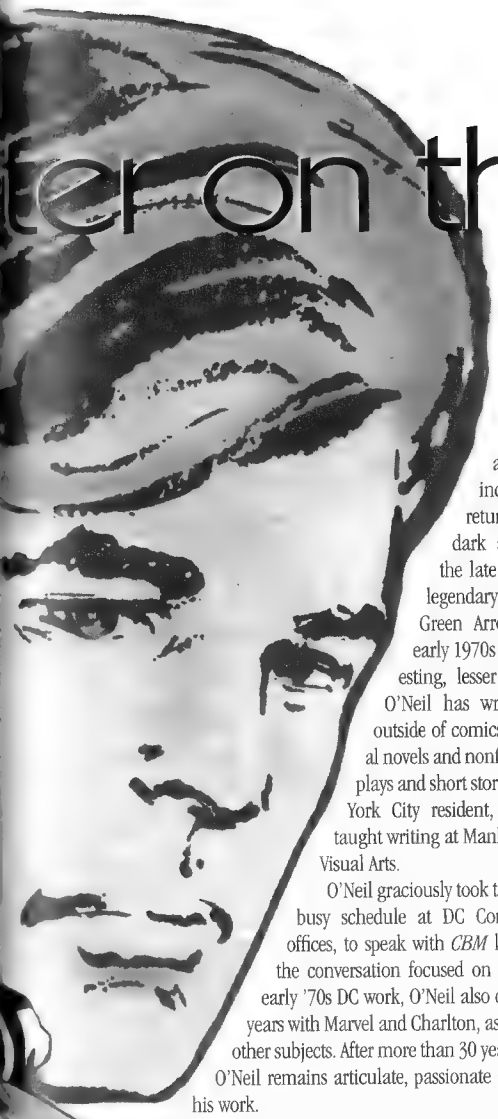
Special thanks to Pat Calhoun, Tony Gleeson, Marlene Handler and Marifran O'Neil. This article is dedicated to Bob's new son, Leo.

Like Bob Dylan before him, Denny O'Neil stood at the center of a revolution that elevated a clichéd, ridiculed medium to a place where even college professors paid some attention. While Dylan operated in the pop music world of the mid 1960s, O'Neil came on with nearly equal veracity at the decade's end to summarily blow apart and then reconstruct much of what they, and we, thought comic books could be.

Advertisement art for a 1983 DC Comics re-issue of the GL/GA series.

BY BOB BRODSKY & K

ter on the Storm!



VIN HANLEY

Now group editor of DC Comics' Batman line—O'Neil's comic book accomplishments include helping to return Batman to his dark avenger roots in the late '60s, writing the legendary Green Lantern/Green Arrow series of the early 1970s and several interesting, lesser known projects. O'Neil has written extensively outside of comics including several novels and nonfiction works, teleplays and short stories. A 32-year New York City resident, O'Neil has also taught writing at Manhattan's School of Visual Arts.

O'Neil graciously took time from his ever-busy schedule at DC Comics' Manhattan offices, to speak with *CBM* last July. Though the conversation focused on his late '60s and early '70s DC work, O'Neil also discussed his early years with Marvel and Charlton, as well as a string of other subjects. After more than 30 years in the industry, O'Neil remains articulate, passionate and committed to his work.

O'Neil grew up "a good Catholic kid" in St. Louis, Missouri. "As a kid I was a devoted comic book reader," O'Neil recalls today. "A little ritual after Sunday Mass—my father would stop at the local store and he would get milk and eggs, and what we needed for breakfast, and he'd usually buy me a comic book. Later my grandfather did something similar, so I was a stone fan before there were such things," O'Neil says. "I have very pleasant memories of being sprawled out on the front porch reading comics on a summer afternoon. I just loved the stuff. I didn't know I loved it, but looking back I can see I was a stone comics lover." His favorites? "I remember Batman and Superman, but I also remember loving the Vigilante and Green Arrow."

"But then, as I went into high school, there were a lot of other things to claim my attention," O'Neil continues. "Also, I now know that comics just weren't around to be bought anymore. The little stores, like the one that my father and I stopped at, went out of business after the end of the war. The stores that survived found that if they used their space for paperback books instead of comic books, they would make a lot more money per sale."

O'Neil graduated from St. Louis University in 1961 with an English Literature major and minors in Creative Writing and Philosophy. He then served two years in the Navy getting "some practical hands-on journalistic experience, and a lot of experience mopping floors." In a bit of history, he also participated in the blockade of Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

"I came out of the Navy, taught school for a year and decided that I wanted to write in some way," O'Neil remembers. He answered an ad for a beat reporter from a newspaper in Cape Girardeau—a Mississippi port town located near St. Louis. As a small town journalist, O'Neil would make a connection that would change his life.

Denny meets Roy

"As a reporter I was on the road a lot—spending time in bus stations and drug stores—and I noticed comics were back. I suddenly realized that I hadn't seen these things in about 10 years so I bought some and found I really enjoyed them. I then did some rudimentary reporting and found that comics were in fact in the middle of a renaissance. I did two articles on 'The Return of Comic Books' and then Roy Thomas got in touch with me—his parents subscribed to the paper."

O'Neil poses in the Batmobile at the 1994 San Diego Con.

Thomas, then a teacher at Fox High School outside of St. Louis, had already accepted an offer to go to New York and be Mort Weisinger's assistant on DC's Superman line of comic books. "So I did a third article—on Roy. I went over to his apartment on a Sunday afternoon and bored my girlfriend silly as I sat and talked with Roy. I was really turned on by the conversation and the chance to write the piece," O'Neil says enthusiastically—sounding as if their conversation was last Tuesday instead of 1965.

"About a month later I got a call from Roy asking if I would be interested in the Marvel Writer's Test. He had moved to New York, worked with Mort for about two weeks, and then took a job with Stan Lee. So I got this test and, 'why not?'—it was four pages of Fantastic Four without copy and it seemed like an amusing thing to do for 20 minutes. So I did it, sent it to Roy, and about a week after that a whole lot of things happened in one afternoon, the

culmination of which was that I accepted an offer to come to New York and be Stan Lee's second assistant." O'Neil elaborates with laughter; "It was mostly too goofy a thing not to do. So I thought I'll certainly give this a year, I'll get some stories to tell and then I'll probably come back to what I considered to be my real profession which was small town journalism. I somehow never got back to that paper."

O'Neil worked as a Marvel staffer for six months before giving up a steady check for the star-crossed life of a freelance writer. Interestingly, one of his major projects of the period occurred well outside comics. "I wrote a book on presidential elections that first couple of years. It was a coffee table book called *Contest for Power* and I'm sure it's totally unavailable now. It was not a bad project and it got my wife, infant child and me through a summer that would have been virtually penniless without it."

O'Neil wrote a couple of stories for *Patsy and Hedy* and *Millie The Model* before succeeding Stan Lee on Dr. Strange in *Strange Tales*.

"My assignment on Doc Strange came about because Marvel was in the process of exploding and Stan, who had written everything, couldn't keep up with it all. Roy was already kind of full up so neither of them, for whatever reason, wanted to do Doc Strange and I was the other warm body in the office."

"My job was pretty simple, I had to imitate Stan Lee," O'Neil says. "Success was judged by how indistinguishable my work was from his and I don't have one word of complaint about that now. Stan Lee's style was unique and it was what was making Marvel Comics happen."

"I think every young writer starting out with a new craft has to imitate somebody—whether consciously or unconsciously," says O'Neil. "Well, for me it was all nicely spelled out—'Imitate Stan Lee.'"

"Which I did and of course there were things I might have done differently… but I'm very grateful for the fact that those first six months I knew what I was supposed to do, and if I did it with reasonable competence I was successful. That's a much bigger break than most writers get starting out."

Stan Lee aside, O'Neil's brief Dr. Strange run in *Strange Tales* (#145, June 1966 through #149, October 1966) stands well on its own. Read them today and one can sense a new talent finding its way. Some aficionados even suggest that Steve Ditko's atmospheric artwork loosened up and actually improved from Lee to O'Neil.

Enter Sergius O'Shaugnessy

By mid 1967, O'Neil's Marvel output had dwindled to occasional odd jobs and the young writer found work at Charlton Comics using the colorful pen name Sergius O'Shaugnessy.

"I don't remember who told me that this guy from Derby, Conn., Dick Giordano, was in town once a week interviewing prospective writers and artists," O'Neil recalls. "So I went to see Dick—he would come in on a Thursday—they had a rented a one-room office on Fifth Avenue somewhere. So I went up and saw him and came away with an assignment. I fell into a rhythm of going up there every Thursday morning and being given a job."

O'Neil wrote a wide range of stories during his year and a half with Charlton including humor, western and superhero assignments. Usually restricted to back-up and fill-in work, O'Neil's stories are remembered by many Charlton fans as being superior to their lead features. One reason for this reversal was that lead characters like The Blue Beetle and Captain Atom originated in the pre-Guardian days, while most of their back-ups were created during the editor's brief, innovative run.

The unusual, well-remembered "Children of Doom" from *Charlton Premiere* #2 (November 1967) captures much of Charlton's rambunctious late '60s spirit. The book length novel is an 'end of the world' piece that gives an early example of O'Neil's ability to apply science fiction to further his own character-driven, socially conscious, comic book style.

"One day Dick called me and said that something they had planned to publish in *Charlton Premiere*—at the last minute they discovered that they didn't have the rights to it, so could I come up with something in two days? That became 'Children of Doom,'—instant comic book," O'Neil laughs. "It didn't make any difference whether (artist) Pat Boyette and I succeeded or failed. What we had to do was get it done and that may have been a very liberating experience."

Even more interesting was O'Neil's first superhero creation—The Prankster. Well illustrated by Jim Aparo, The Prankster made his sole appearance as a seven-page back-up in the final issue of *Peter Cannon, Thunderbolt* (#60, November 1967). The Prankster was an entertaining anti-hero in training who is best described by O'Neil's splash page introduction:

"Ultrapolis…A city which may never exist! But if it does, it will be a place ruled by brute force…Where love, laughter, music, art, every expression of human dignity can be a crime punishable by death! Where one man uses mankind's most ancient weapons…wit, humor and courage…to combat overwhelming evil! His name. The Prankster."

Assuming that wasn't enough, The Prankster was the only superhero we know who quoted Lord Byron!

Wander was a quirky space cowboy who laid out his roll in the back pages of *The Cheyenne Kid* from issue #66 to #87. This time, O'Neil and Aparo's hero was a Native of the planet Sirus V who crash-landed in the old west. Though he looked like a cowboy, Wander spoke like Hamlet, having learned

English from an old book. The strip was a delightful juxtaposition of western and science fiction.

"We had no reason to believe anybody was even reading them," O'Neil says. "They were obscure cowboy books and back-ups in obscure cowboy books. So in a way they were a great learning experience. Anything you wanted to try was probably okay, as long as it wasn't obscene."

What was the inspiration for such a unique character? "Oh, I have no idea. I just needed to come up with 8 pages a month. It didn't get much more complicated than that. I was living poor on the Lower East Side, somebody offered me a chance for another eight pages a month and, by God, you find a way to get it."

GET ME--? YOU COME FOOTIN' AROUND, YOU'RE GONNA GET LEANED ON!
GIVE IT TO 'IM, MIKE!
YEAH, MAN!
AND THE ONLOOKERS ARE ENCOURAGING HIM! NO RESPECT FOR LAW AND ORDER--NONE!

Three times the money

When Charlton folded its superhero titles in late 1967, Dick Giordano moved to DC with five key members of his team: O'Neil, Aparo, Ditko, Boyette and Steve Skeates. Giordano's first assignment was to revive a handful of flagging books and introduce a series of new titles. O'Neil well remembers Giordano's pitch to him. "We were getting four bucks a page at Charlton and DC was offering twelve bucks a page. Dick said something like, 'How would you like to do exactly what you're doing now, but at three times the money?' It didn't sound like a bad deal at all."

"This forbidding comic book giant—and suddenly I was there," O'Neil recalls. "Coming in with long hair and jeans and so on, we were not exactly welcomed. Comic books were very respectable. I think because the form was considered not respectable, people and the offices had to look very straight. I can remember at least once being told not to walk down the corridor past the president's office dressed like that."

"It was an odd place, because I think the guys who were in charge had no interest in what they were publishing at all, and they were pretty tight on the purse strings," O'Neil recollects. "It was hard to buy protestations of poverty from a guy who arrived in a chauffeur driven limousine every morning, and the chauffeur hung around, doing nothing, until it was time to take the guy home at 5 o'clock. But they couldn't afford to help out the freelance writers and artists with health insurance."

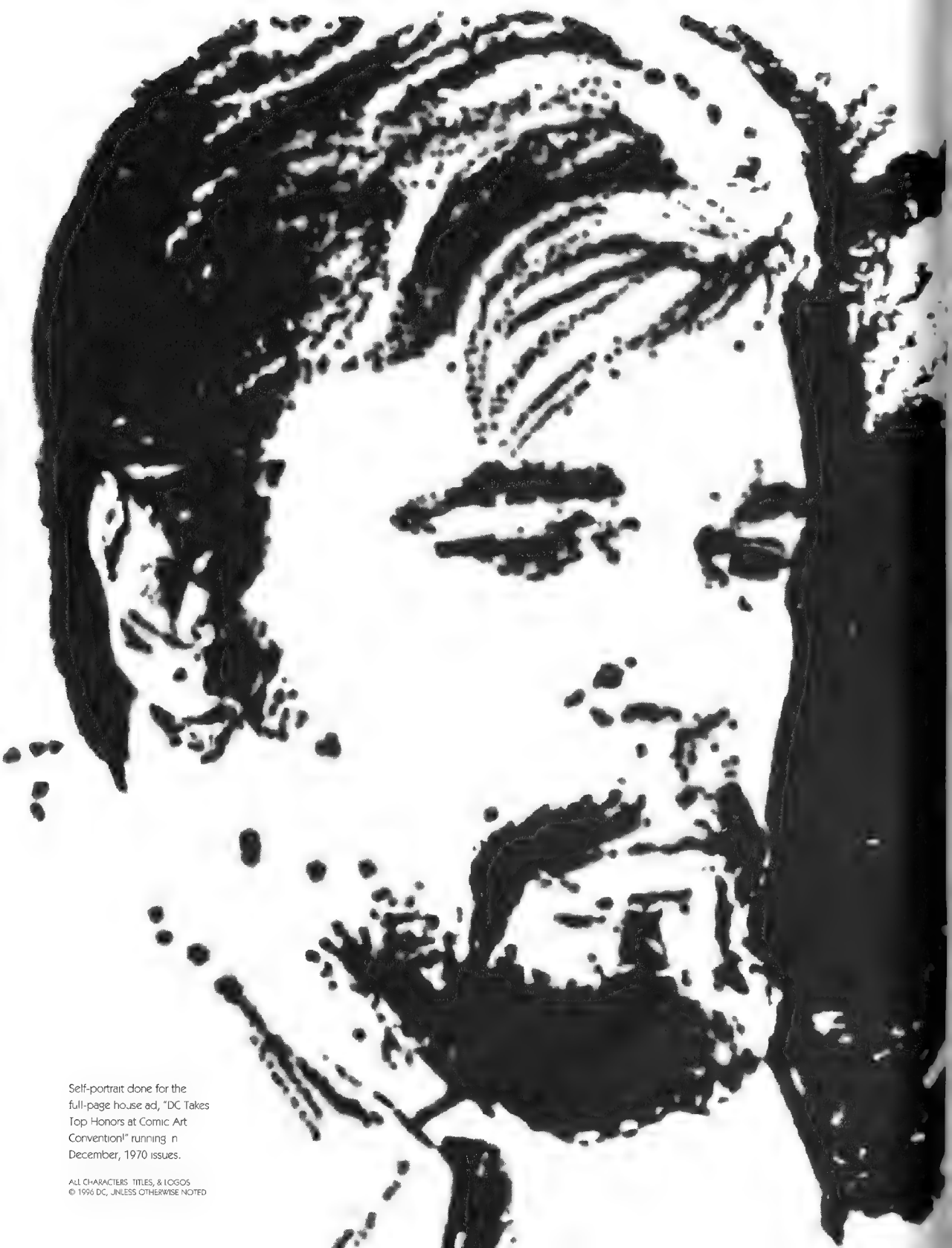
Until about seven years ago, O'Neil knew nothing of the upheaval at DC, brought on by a reasonable request for health insurance coverage from a group of artists and writers. Long time pros like Gardner Fox and Arnold Drake were shown the door while Giordano and company were brought in to pick up the slack. "It would have been a little problem for me," says O'Neil with an edge in his voice. "I did have a non-working wife and son and I really needed the money. On the other hand, ehh, a scab! I'm glad that I was not forced to make a decision at the time."

"It was a rotten thing to do to those guys—terrible, inexcusable," O'Neil says today. "It's to the credit of the people who run things now that they don't mind talking about that because it has changed a lot. That's one of the ways it's a very different business for the good. It was (DC publisher) Paul Levitz himself who told me that story."

O'Neil's first two assignments at DC were unusual: *Beware the Creeper* and *Bomba the Jungle Boy*. The two titles represented the dual challenge presented to Giordano and his team—introduce new characters like the Creeper and revamp failed ones such as Bomba.

Done up in pseudo Marvel style—the Creeper was one of a handful of innovative, short lived, titles launched by DC in early 1968 to play catch up to Marvel's "House of Ideas." Steve Ditko drew his quirky creation in a style smacking of his great Spider-Man work, while the wise cracking hero with all too human headaches reeked of Spidey and other Marvel superheroes. O'Neil authored the character's brief run in his own magazine (#1, May/June 1968 through #6, March/April 1969).

"Without meaning to do it, I think I rained on Steve's parade, because that was probably his creation. I didn't write the first story; I have no idea who did," O'Neil says. "I started playing the Creeper a little satirically in that he was thinking to himself—'I'm really bullshitting,' he was aware of the artifice. I think that probably goes fairly contrary to *(Continued on page 64)*



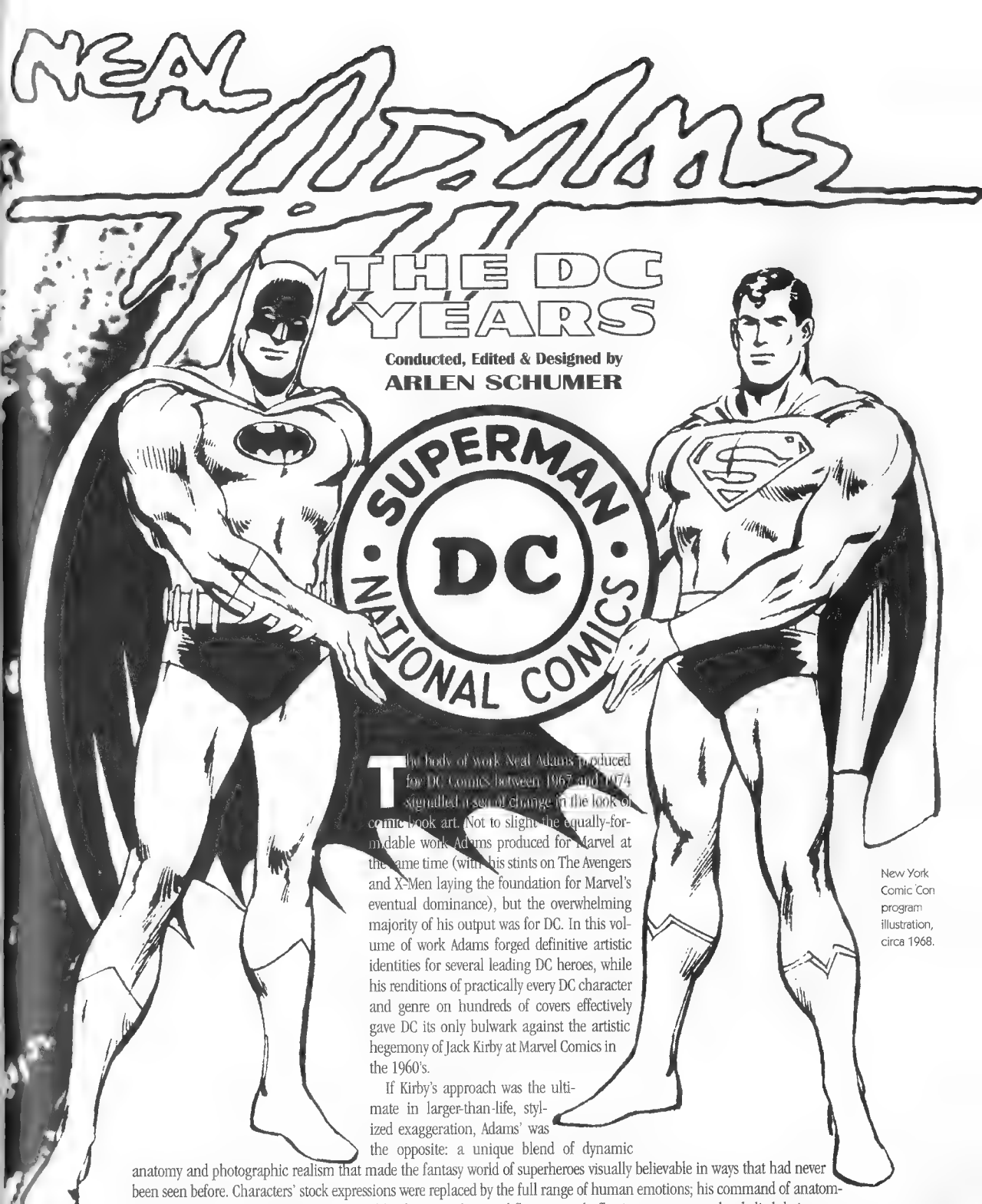
Self-portrait done for the full-page house ad, "DC Takes Top Honors at Comic Art Convention!" running in December, 1970 issues.

ALL CHARACTERS TITLES, & LOGOS
© 1996 DC, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

NEAL ADAMS

THE DC YEARS

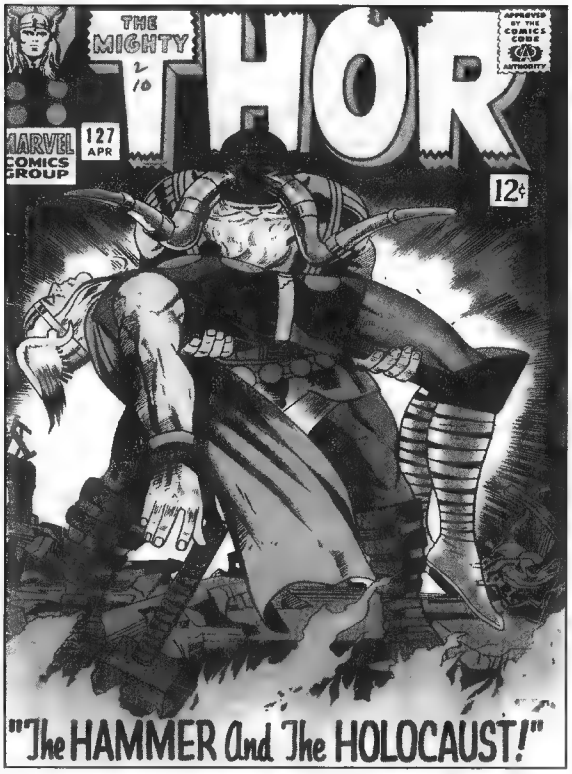
Conducted, Edited & Designed by
ARLEN SCHUMER

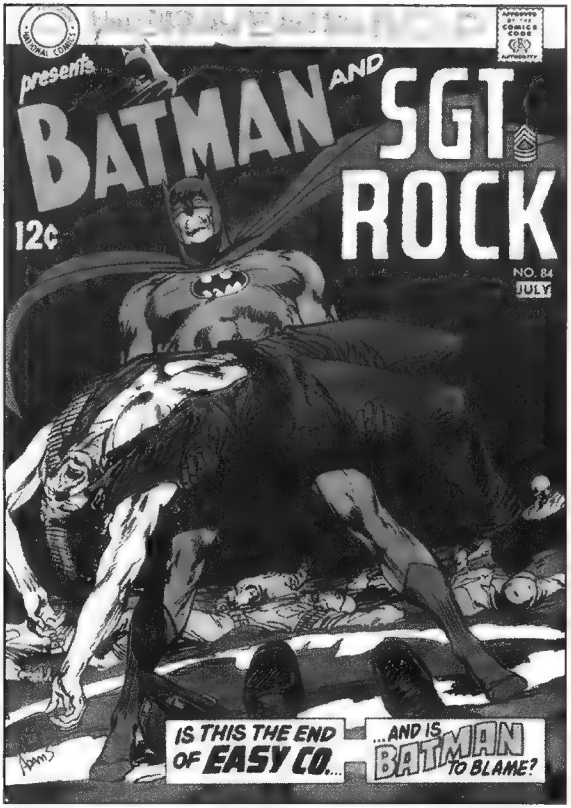


New York Comic Con program illustration, circa 1968.

The body of work Neal Adams produced for DC Comics between 1967 and 1974 signalled a sea of change in the look of comic book art. Not to slight the equally-formidable work Adams produced for Marvel at the same time (with his stints on The Avengers and X-Men laying the foundation for Marvel's eventual dominance), but the overwhelming majority of his output was for DC. In this volume of work Adams forged definitive artistic identities for several leading DC heroes, while his renditions of practically every DC character and genre on hundreds of covers effectively gave DC its only bulwark against the artistic hegemony of Jack Kirby at Marvel Comics in the 1960's.

If Kirby's approach was the ultimate in larger-than-life, stylized exaggeration, Adams' was the opposite: a unique blend of dynamic anatomy and photographic realism that made the fantasy world of superheroes visually believable in ways that had never been seen before. Characters' stock expressions were replaced by the full range of human emotions; his command of anatomical perspective and foreshortening allowed his heroes to leap and fly in smooth, flowing movements that belied their superhuman bulk. In fact, Adams once commented that if superheroes really existed, they would have to look like the way he drew them! His page layouts and panel breakdowns were as breathtaking as they were risk-taking. His pen-and-brush inking style set





© 1996 MEG

new standards for the delineation of light and shadow. His visual acuity enabled Adams' writer collaborators to break new ground telling the kinds of stories that could be told in comic books. In doing so, he influenced an entire generation of artists, their eyes opened to the potentials of the medium itself.

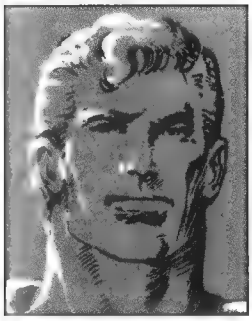
Adams occupies a unique place at the crossroads of comic book history; his work is the bridge between the end of the Silver Age of comic book art and today's diverse Modern Age. By becoming the realistic model for all artists who followed him into the field–think Brian Bolland and Bill Sienkiewicz–Adams' style also influenced just as many artists who created unorthodox drawing and illustrative styles in reaction to his model, breaking free from the shackles of "realism"–think Walt Simonson (and Sienkiewicz, again!). From Howard Chaykin to Dave Sim to Frank Miller and countless others, from art directors to movie directors, the roster of Adams' "pupils" reads like a "who's who" of today's comic artists.

In a way, I am one of those pupils. I was lucky enough to be at the right age to experience Neal's work when it first appeared, yet old enough to have been a fan of DC's Silver Age artists, Carmine Infantino, Murphy Anderson, Gil Kane, and Curt Swan. That meant I was bowled over by how different Neal's work looked from his DC predecessors. He was one of my childhood idols, and influenced my life and work–yet how many of us can say they got to work for their childhood idols? I can, because I worked for Neal at Continuity between 1983 and '85, where I met my wife and partner, color artist Sherri Wolfgang. (Since leaving Continuity together in '86, we now run The Dynamic Duo Studio, Inc., creating comic art for the advertising and editorial markets.)

I always wanted to interview Neal about his pivotal role in the history of comics, when he entered the lumbering, slumbering industry giant that was DC Comics and proceeded to turn it, and the entire comic book field, on its ear! (Especially since this period had gone largely unexamined by comic book historians and fan magazines.)

My approach was simple–we went through a complete collection of his DC works in chronological order, which allowed Neal to react to only those works that moved him. My interviewing "style" took the form of observations to his reactions, rather than the conventional agenda of prepared questions. We did begin conventionally, though, at the beginning, when I asked Neal to describe the events in his early life that led up to his walking through the doors of DC Comics for the first time...

Neal Adams: I wasn't necessarily interested in becoming a comic book artist. I guess, like any other kid, my interests changed day to day.



But as I got older, I focused on the artists that came from DC, because I remembered reading DC comics when I was younger.

Because I was so young in the early 1950's, I didn't understand the whole comics code thing. I didn't understand why all these comic book publishers closed down, especially EC. I loved all the EC artists. I loved Wally Wood and Jack Davis and Al Williamson, and I was aware of them enough that when I got together with other students at the School of Industrial Arts (a vocational school in Manhattan now known as the High School of Art & Design), we compared notes about our favorites.

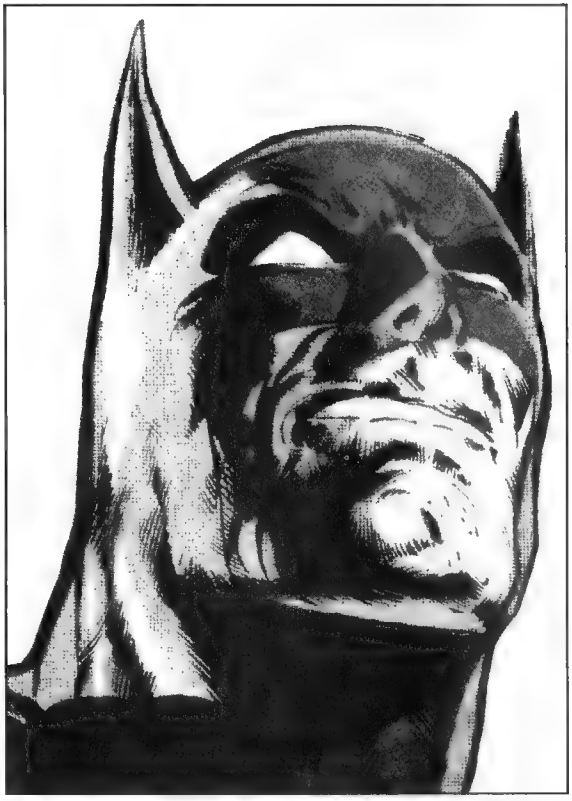
If anything rocked us young students, it was Jack Kirby's Challengers of the Unknown, when Wally Wood was inking. It was simply incredible. Then Jack did Sky Masters of the Space Force, the comic strip that took him off Challengers. That just knocked us on our asses. It showed us that it was possible to do something really good in comics.

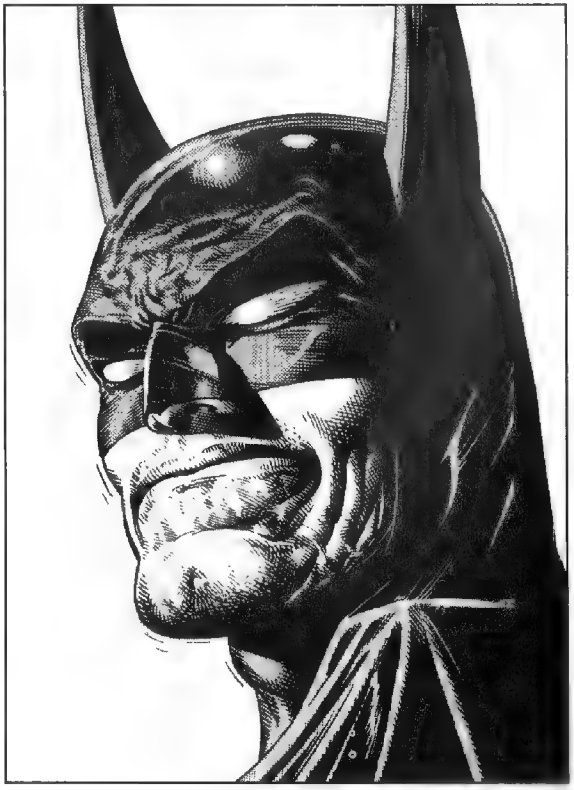
But the school dissuaded us from studying comic books in any way. That we were even interested was considered a form of insanity, because, after all, you couldn't make money in comic books. But because there was a sufficient group of us that wanted to study them for whatever reason, the School actually reformulated what they called the cartooning class into more of a cartooning/comic strip/comic book class, so we were able to do comic books. To a certain extent we forced the issue. There was no reason for the school to go along with it except we were so dedicated and wanted it so much.

Arlen Schumer: *Did any of your schoolmates follow you into comics?*

Neal: Not really. Some became art directors, some became animators, but basically nobody got into comic books from that year or the year before that or the year after that. It was a closed field. The school was right and we were wrong.

It was closed so much that people who had done the greatest comic book work of all were forced out. Al Williamson once-in-a-while did a comic book story for Dell or would be an assistant on John Prentice's Rick Kirby, but essentially, he was an unbelievable talent that got put aside. The industry made it necessary for Frank Frazetta, for





(Far left)Thor cover by Kirby, 1966.
Brave & Bold cover by Adams, 1969.
(Left vertical column, top to bottom) Superman by Curt Swan/George Klein, 1966; The Spectre by Murphy Anderson, 1967; Batman by Carmine Infantino/Murphy Anderson, 1967; Green Arrow by Mike Sekowsky/Bernard Sachs,1960; Green Lantern by Gil Kane, 1967. Right column: Adams' versions.
(This page) Large Batman head by Adams, 1974.
Large Batman head by Brian Bolland, 1996: "I would be unhappy if my work wasn't considered to be a challenge to everybody else out there, that the stuff that's out there now has gone that far past mine."–Adams

"I wasn't necessa becoming a com

example, to become a penciler for Al Capp on Li'l Abner for nine years.

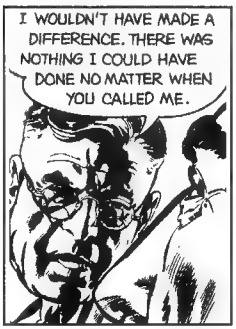
There was less work to give out, and an awful lot of the published work was just not good. I didn't quite understand why comic books weren't as good as they had been, but there were terrible titles. *Mr. District Attorney, My Greatest Adventure,* these were not comics that appealed to the young at heart.

What stood out to me from the remnants of what was left in the comic book industry was Robert Kanigher's war comics, because Joe Kubert was there. I had followed Kubert's work from the time I was about 12, when he was doing *Tor* (1953), and he impressed me a great deal. I always loved Joe's stuff, his compositions and everything he did. I think of other artists as teachers. They have something to teach me, and if I'm smart enough I'll learn it, and be grateful to them. Like Kubert. He taught me how to spot blacks.

Arlen: *Did the revival of the Flash in '56 and the dawn of the Silver Age register with you?*

Neal: Nobody thought of it as the Silver Age. It was just one of the editors at DC Comics trying to bring back the Flash, but this was a new Flash. Carmine Infantino did some good pencils, but I think a lot was lost in the inking. I bought *Flash* every month hoping Joe Kubert would come back! (Kubert inked the very first Flash story in *Showcase* #4, 1956). *Green Lantern* was about the best of the new books because of Gil Kane, whose work took giant strides at the time. I didn't think they were the greatest comic books in the world, but that was all there was.

AND AS THE STARTLING WORLD-RINGING MESSAGE REACHES THE EARS OF THE FAMED MEMBERS OF THE DARING QUARTET...
ACE MORGAN--CRACK JET PILOT
ROCKY DAVIS--CHAMPION WRESTLER
SOS--YOUR ASSISTANCE IS NEEDED--SOS--COME AT ONCE-
RED RYAN--MOUNTAIN CLIMBER
PROF HALEY--EXPERT SKINDIVER



(Top) Challengers of The Unknown by Kirby/Wood, 1957. (Center) Sky Masters of the Space Force by Kirby/Wood, 1958. (Left bottom) Adams does Wood: panel from Sky Masters samp e page done at age 16, 1957 (Right bottom) Panel from Ben Casey, 1965: Wood ful y integrated into Adams' sty e.

So, when I got out of school in 1959, I went to DC Comics with samples. I showed a war page, an Adam Strange page. I didn't even like Adam Strange, I just did it to impress them. And if you looked at my samples, you'd say, "He's professional. Hire this guy." But I couldn't get past the front door. They sent a nice man out named Bill Perry, and it was as if my old school had given him a tape recording of what to say. "You're wasting your time, I'm sorry, you're a very talented young man, you should do something else, blah, blah, blah..." He wasn't even allowed to take the samples in to the editors. Then, strangely, he quietly apologized.

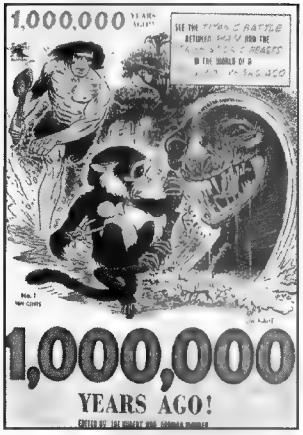
Arlen: *Was there a hiring freeze at DC at this time?*

Neal: It was worse. There are no words for it. Not only weren't they hiring high school and college students, they weren't hiring the greats! I've heard stories of highly professional people like John Severin doing wonderful war stories for DC and then given the heave-ho. There was Mort Drucker, who we all recognized early on as being fantastic. You couldn't get better than Mort Drucker. Yet he worked in the production room at DC Comics.

Arlen: *Was this "total freeze" a result of simply not having enough work to pass out during the dry period following the establishment of the Comics Code? Or was there more to it?*

Neal: It was that America had put

rily interested in ic book artist."



down comic books. Comic books were like toilet paper. Garbage. Just as I can't tell you how bad it was to be a black person in 1950's America from a white person's point of view–and this is an odd analogy to make–the same thing was true about comic books. They were considered to be one of the lowest things you could do.

When I got into the field, you couldn't get artists to say they drew comic books. They were literally ashamed. They would only admit to being illustrators. They were more proud of work they did outside of comics. A good part of my first few years doing comics was spent being a psychiatric cheerleader to these guys, saying, "We're doing comics and they're paying us, isn't this great?" I'm talking about professionals who'd been in it for 15 years, they needed somebody to tell them how great it was, how lucky they were, they were so down in the mouth all the time.

Things didn't change for a long time, and from my point of view, I'm happy they didn't. Fighting your way into comics is almost an honor. It is, after all, a privilege to

ADAM EXPLAINS . . .
THAT GUN'LL BE READY TO FIRE TOMORROW! THE ONLY WAY I CAN GET TO IT IS THROUGH THE GUARD SHIP, SO....
WHEN ADAM FINISHES HIS EXPLANATION TO ALANNA!---
TAKE CARE, ADAM!
ADAM FLIES UP TOWARDS THE GUARD SHIP.....
A HUMAN! OPEN FIRE!
YOU BOYS ARE IN FOR A LITTLE SURPRISE!
JUST AS THE SORANS ARE ABOUT TO FIRE .....
??COMMANDER! COMMANDER! THE HUMAN..HE...HE HAS DISAPPEARED!
THE SHIP COMMANDER SENDS HIS MEN OUTSIDE THE SHIP TO SEARCH FOR ADAM STRANGE!...
--AND DON'T COME BACK WITHOUT HIM!
AS THE COMMANDER CLOSES THE AIR LOCK...
SLAM

do comic books. It's a privilege to do art in any form.

Arlen: *So after being rebuffed by DC, where did you go?*

Neal: I tried to get work at Archie Comics because it was the only other place around. I brought in samples of The Fly and they were less than enthusiastic. They suggested I do samples of Archie pages. I did four sets of samples. They criticized them, didn't think I quite got it, but maybe they'd give me some joke pages. So I became the first new guy in comic books in how many years doing Archie joke pages.

Every time I'd bring pages in, I would ask if they showed my Fly samples to either Jack Kirby or Joe Simon, his partner at the time.

I nagged them so much that eventually they said, "Look, we're gonna call Joe, he saw your samples." So Joe Simon gets on the

(Top left) Our Fighting Forces cover by Kubert, 1952. Portrait of Kubert by Adams for '70 Comic Art Convention awards ad. Tor #1 cover by Kubert, 1953. Adam Strange sample page done by Adams for DC in 1957. "He's professional. Hire this guy!"

phone and says, "Neal, I'm gonna do you the biggest favor of your life. You're not gonna think it's a favor, but I'm rejecting you. Because believe me, you don't want to be in comics. You're a young man, you have a bright future ahead of you, the worst thing I could possibly do is have you draw comic books. Go out and get a good job, be an art director, you're very talented. I know this isn't sitting well with you..."

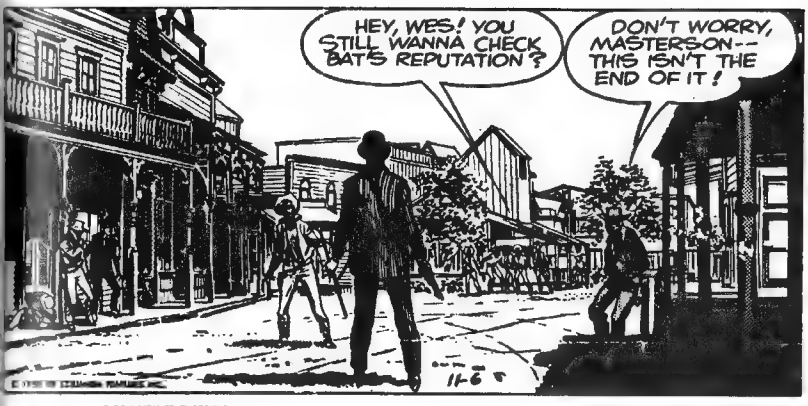
And in my mind I'm going, "No, it isn't sitting well with me!"

Arlen: *You felt you'd heard all this before?*

Neal: But not on the verge of getting work. I was dying and he was killing me with good intentions. There is a part of me that understands that very much. But not then. I was so unhappy. Vic Gorelick, who continues to work there and remains a friend, felt sorry for me, and pulled out one of the sample Fly pages I'd done. They'd cut out a panel on the bottom with a razor blade! "We used this in a Fly story. I'm gonna pay you a third of a page," and that's how I got my first superhero work printed!

Shortly after that I met Howard Nostrand, an ex-comic book artist who used to work for Bob Powell. He needed a background assistant on a comic strip based on the Bat Masterson TV series. At the same time, there was a lot

WHILE DOLLYS ATTENTION IS DIVERTED, TOMMY RUSHES OUT OF SIGHT. HE RUBS HIS MAGIC RING AND IS TRANSFORMED INTO THE FLY!
© 1996 ARCHIE



GUNFIGHT, EH? OKAY, WHERE'S BAT MASTERSON! HE'S GONE TOO FAR THIS TIME!
THAT WOULD BE SHERIFF ANDREWS-- WHICH MEANS WE'RE NOT OUT OF THE WOODS YET!
HERRON and NOSTRAND

© COLUMBIA FEATURES INC

of commercial illustration going through Nostrand's studio, so I picked up a lot of techniques. Things that I didn't learn in school I learned in that studio… and I was like a sponge. A guy there named Elmer Wexler, who taught me a lot of things, also did work for an art service called Johnstone and Cushing that specialized in comic-style illustration. When Bat Masterson ended, I did samples for them.

What was so wonderful about working at J&C was that up and coming artists that might have otherwise been in the comic book field worked there because they paid the best. I fell in with this new group of guys that was doing very commercial-type comics, taking Polaroids and tracing them. I was, again, like a sponge. Every new idea that came along I would try immediately. By the time I was 20 years old, I had such an incredible education.

Then I got the call from Al Capp's brother Jerry about doing a comic strip based on the Ben Casey TV series. His brother, Elliot Kaplan, coincidentally, had just gotten the comic strip rights to Dr. Kildare, so there was a little jealousy going on. Elliot got a hold of Ken Bald, and Jerry got a hold of me. Turned out pretty good for Jerry, 'cause the samples I did went to one syndicate and sold it. The strip sold all around the world, not just in America. Partially, I hope, because the artwork was so good.

The reason the artwork was good was because I was very competitive in those days. The New York papers had all the good strips like Big Ben Bolt, Stan Drake's Heart of Juliet Jones, Leonard Starr's Onstage, Dan Barry's Flash Gordon. Every day I would sit with them and go, "Okay, who's best today?" I was so anxious to beat everybody that I just made it my business. I would do something new everyday just to exercise my mental facilities. There I was, 21 years old, with a comic strip. I had all this history to look at, all these guys to look at, and say, "I'm building on you. You did this, now I'm going to do this." After about a year, seven out of ten days, mine would be best.

Arlen: *There were artists who wanted a comic strip their whole lives, it was the prize, and you had it at age 20.*

Neal: Yes, it was the prize, and I got it. In all honesty, I had no right to have it, but I worked hard for it. The syndicate was happy with the sales, so I didn't short anybody on it. But it was a rare privilege. And when it ended, I decided I would become an illustrator.

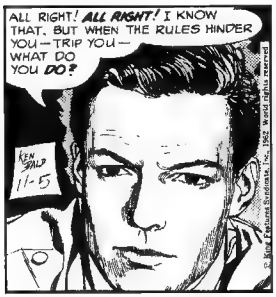
I took six months off and started to paint paintings in the style of Bernie Fuchs, Turpning, and Al Parker, and put together a pretty good portfolio. I took it to a few places, children's books, magazines, and then I left it in an advertising agency where I was doing storyboards for somebody. About a week later I went back to get it and it was gone! Bye-bye portfolio; six month's work and the beginning and end of a new career.

So I had to make a living now. I thought, "Well, maybe I'll try comic books." I went not to DC Comics but to Warren Publications, where I met Archie Goodwin. He's one of the nicest people I've ever met, still remains, in my opinion, one of the nicest people in comics. Archie gave me a shot, and I started to draw stories for him. I did each one in a different style, one in wash, one in pencil. I took photographs for all of them. Unfortunately, I was acting too much the artist, applying tremendous amounts of technique, and it was a burden. It seemed to me it would be easier to do regular comic books.

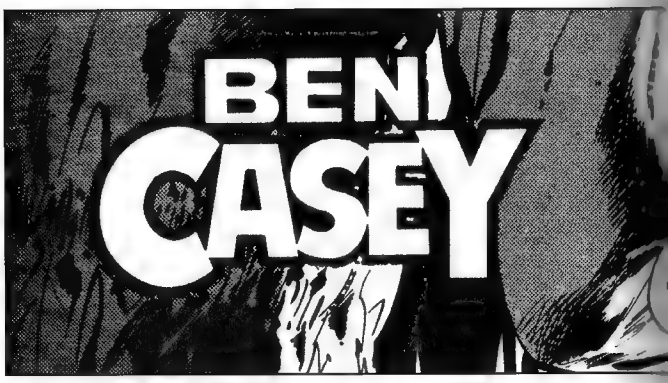
So I took a chance and went over to DC Comics. Marvel Comics was finally waking DC up, and DC was beginning to see new people. The doors were still pretty closed but you had the sense you could get in and see some-

(facing page) Archie joke page, circa 1960. Adams' first published superhero art, Archie Comics' The Fly, circa 1959. (Center) Self-promotion piece (Copy: "Neal Adams does line illustrations; full-color illustrations; storyboads; even continuities; just about anything!"). (Above) Bat Masterson strip by Howard Nostrand, backgrounds by Adams, 1959. (Below) AT&T/Chip Martin strip appearing in Boy's Life Magazine, circa early 60's

Chip Martin
COLLEGE REPORTER
meets
"THE NIGHT PEOPLE"
RRRRRRRRRRR
AFTER MIDNIGHT, CHIP, THE CITY BELONGS TO A HANDFUL OF IMPORTANT PEOPLE. DOCTORS, POLICEMEN, FIREMEN. PEOPLE WHO PROTECT OUR SAFETY AND OUR PROPERTY.


ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! I KNOW THAT. BUT WHEN THE RULES HINDER YOU — TRIP YOU — WHAT DO YOU DO?
KEN BALD 11-5
© King Features Syndicate, Inc., 1962. World rights reserved.

Demonstration piece for the Ben Casey ,ob in 1962.
Dr. Kildaire panel by Ken Bald, 1962



body. I made an appointment with Robert Kanigher and showed my stuff. And it was as though I had fallen out of the sky. They called Sol Harrison (DC's longtime production manager) out and showed him my work and asked, "Sol, do you think he can do comic books for us?" And Sol answered, "Is that a question? He can draw. What's your problem?" And so they basically offered me work.

Arlen: *How did your first published work at DC, some short war stories for editor Kanigher in early 1967, come about?*

Neal: When I was finishing up with Ben Casey, I was approached by Capp's brother Elliot again. He said, "There's a book called the "Green Berets" and I have the comic strip rights." He took me to lunch where I met the author Robin Moore, who regaled me with stories of Vietnam. All of which turned my stomach. I knew I wasn't going to say yes, so I said, "Elliot, there are comic book artists that would be great for this strip, one guy in particular who would be better than me, by far." And I suggested he call Joe Kubert. He did, and Joe agreed to work on it. As I reflect on it, in a strange way I had probably made the niche for me to work on DC war comics, because now Kubert couldn't do as many stories for Kanigher.

Arlen: *What was Kanigher like to work with?*

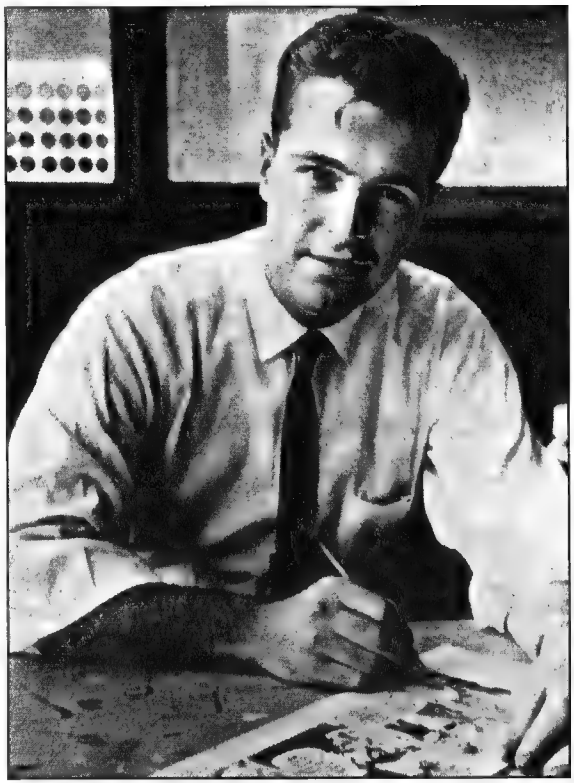
Neal: Kanigher was mean and tough. He's like a military guy. If he gives you a tough time, and you don't put up with it, he respects you. We came to loggerheads one time, but it actually worked out fine.

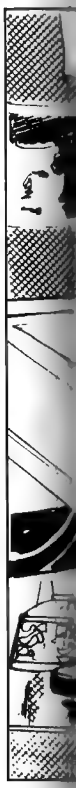
Arlen: *In late '67, you start doing all of editor Mort Weisinger's Superman family covers. How is it that a guy who had just "fallen out of the sky" was entrusted with the company's flagship characters?*

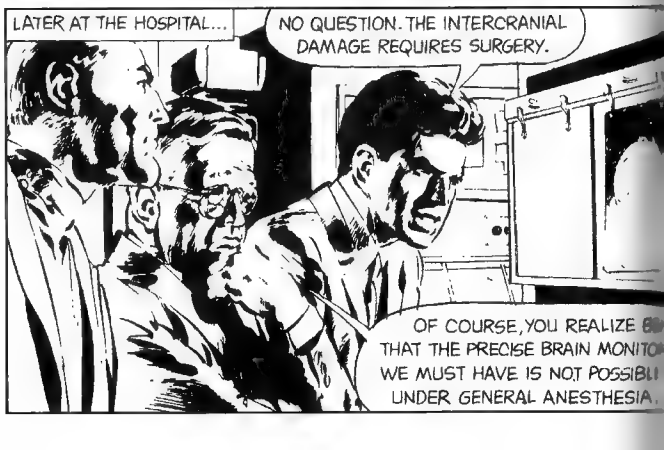
Neal: Weisinger never wanted to give me a cover, and he made it very clear. He said, "I don't like your work, I don't want you doing covers for me." But things happened at that time very quickly up at DC. They had recently decided to let Carmine Infantino be art director, and he was looking to lock himself into place. He just felt, "We've got this new guy, what are we going to have him do?" I could do war stories, superheroes, *Jerry Lewis*. Whatever they gave me, I could do. Every day from their point of view was a revelation.

So, when Carmine saw that I was not afraid to work on his cover layouts as well as my own, he wanted me to do covers. First I inked a Curt Swan Superman cover, making it a little bit more exciting. But that wasn't enough for Carmine. He insisted I do complete Superman covers, but Weisinger was dead set against it. So I said to Mort privately, "If they want me to do covers and you don't, how about letting me try a couple? If you don't like what I do, if you're unhappy, I'll back off, I don't care."

Within two covers, I had won Mort over, because I gave him what he want-

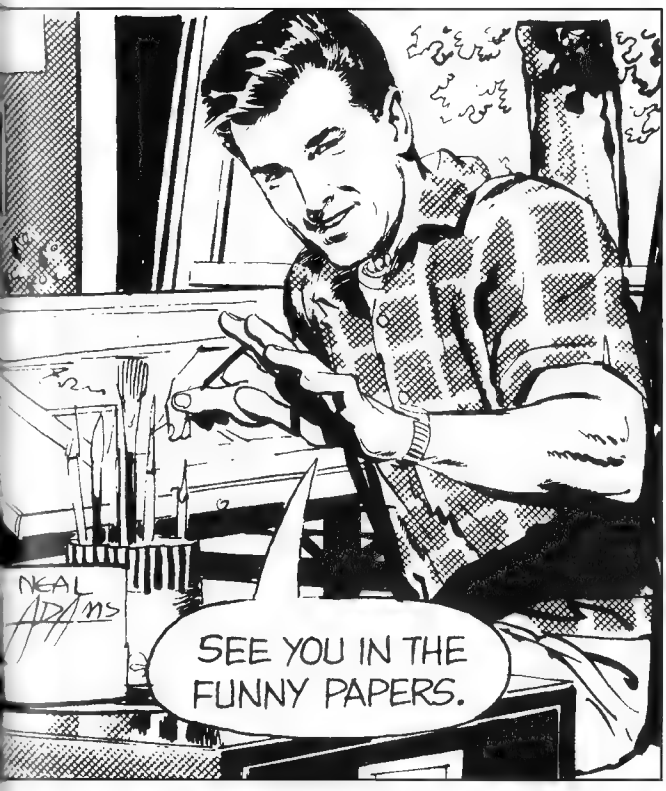





LATER AT THE HOSPITAL...
NO QUESTION. THE INTERCRANIAL DAMAGE REQUIRES SURGERY.
OF COURSE, YOU REALIZE
THAT THE PRECISE BRAIN MONITO
WE MUST HAVE IS NOT POSSIBLI
UNDER GENERAL ANESTHESIA.

(Center. top) Ben Casey Sunday panel, Nov '65. (Left) Photo from The Cartoonist Cookbook, 1966. (right) "See you in the funny papers"—unknown source. (Center bottom) Casey Sunday panels from Nov.'65.

(Facing page: top) Panel done in ink wash from "Curse of The Vampire," Creepy #14, Apr 1967. (Below) Panel done in pencil from "Voodoo Drum," Eerie #10, Jul '67.



THEN WE USE A LOCAL. KEEP HIM CONSCIOUS.
BUT WHAT ABOUT HIS EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL CONDITION? WE NEED HIS CONSCIOUS COOPERATION.

ed. If he didn't like a sketch, I'd make another sketch. He would always put balloons on covers. I didn't have a problem with that. I was a professional. I wasn't a kid off the street. I'd had a career before I came there. That's what DC didn't understand.

All of a sudden, I was affecting sales with the covers I was doing, so Weisinger said, "I want Neal Adams to do all my covers!" He'd get mad at me if I wasn't available to do a cover for him. To a certain extent it added to Carmine's star, almost as though Carmine had discovered me.

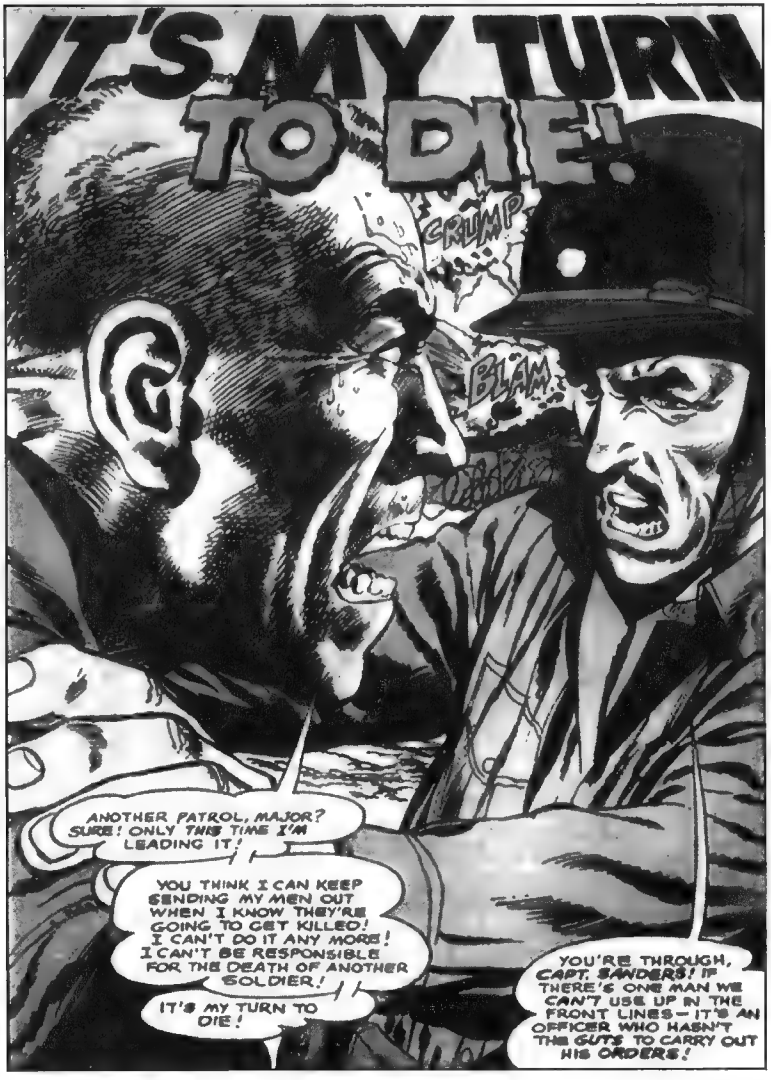
Arlen: *How tight were Infantino's cover layouts?*

Neal: I felt Carmine basically had one cover layout: somebody standing with their legs spread apart and doing something. The price I paid for being the "house cover artist" was having to do some covers like that. I didn't mind.

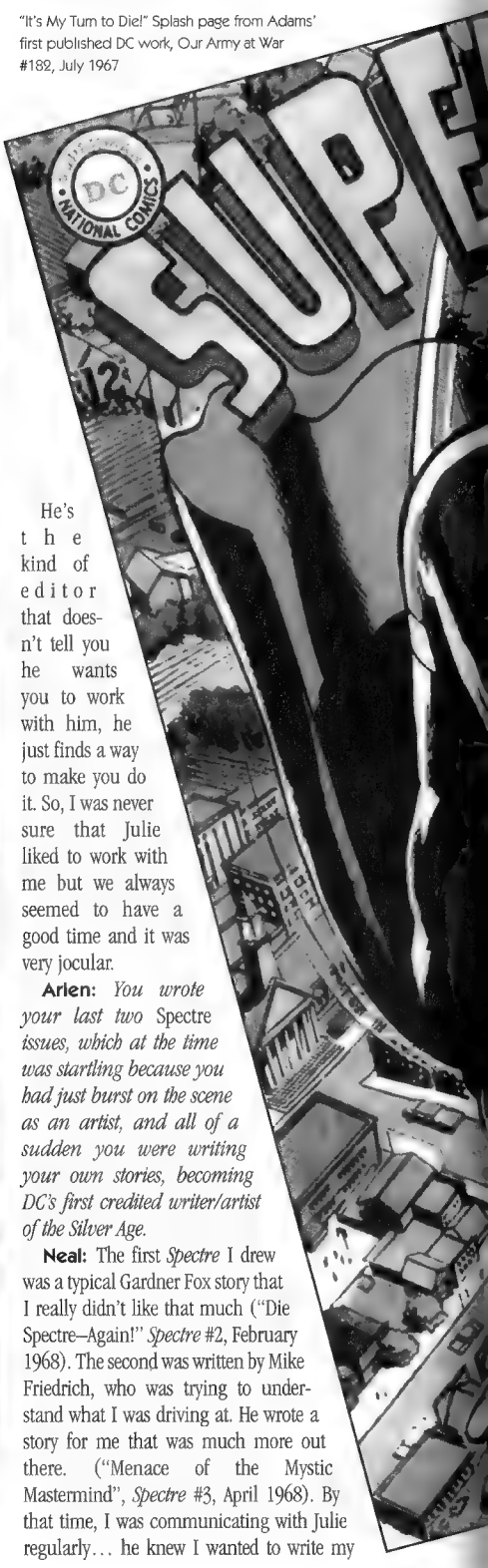
Arlen: *The first superhero series you take on is The Spectre for Julius Schwartz, the first of many collaborations with the quintessential DC editor.*

Neal: Julie Schwartz was always a very gruff guy, one of those "grumpy" editors. If you think of the old style editors, that's Julie. Nothing gets past him; you can't fool him. You have to come up with the goods.

Illustration presented to Joe Kubert upon his being awarded the Green Beret strip, circa 1967.


IT'S MY TURN TO DIE!
CRUMP
BLAM
ANOTHER PATROL, MAJOR? SURE! ONLY THIS TIME I'M LEADING IT!
YOU THINK I CAN KEEP SENDING MY MEN OUT WHEN I KNOW THEY'RE GOING TO GET KILLED! I CAN'T DO IT ANY MORE! I CAN'T BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF ANOTHER SOLDIER!
IT'S MY TURN TO DIE!
YOU'RE THROUGH, CAPT. SANDERS! IF THERE'S ONE MAN WE CAN'T USE UP IN THE FRONT LINES — IT'S AN OFFICER WHO HASN'T THE GUTS TO CARRY OUT HIS ORDERS!

"It's My Turn to Die!" Splash page from Adams' first published DC work, Our Army at War #182, July 1967



He's the kind of editor that doesn't tell you he wants you to work with him, he just finds a way to make you do it. So, I was never sure that Julie liked to work with me but we always seemed to have a good time and it was very jocular.

Arlen: *You wrote your last two* Spectre *issues, which at the time was startling because you had just burst on the scene as an artist, and all of a sudden you were writing your own stories, becoming DC's first credited writer/artist of the Silver Age.*

Neal: The first *Spectre* I drew was a typical Gardner Fox story that I really didn't like that much ("Die Spectre–Again!" *Spectre* #2, February 1968). The second was written by Mike Friedrich, who was trying to understand what I was driving at. He wrote a story for me that was much more out there. ("Menace of the Mystic Mastermind", *Spectre* #3, April 1968). By that time, I was communicating with Julie regularly… he knew I wanted to write my

Portrait of Infantino by Adams for '70 Comic Art Convention awards ad.

Cover of Superboy #143, "The Big Fall!", Dec '67. (Top right) Interior panel by Al Plastino, illustrating the same scene as Adams' cover. Examples like these illustrate why so many felt that Adams' art seemed light years apart from the rest of the DC Silver Age bullpen.

own Spectre story, and I felt I understood his type of story.

When I was in high school, I wrote my own comic book stories as samples. I studied Schwartz' style as an editor, and wrote stories that would be Julie Schwartz stories. A Julie Schwartz story is one in which one major element in the story is a scientific fact that few people knew.

This came in handy, because later on, at DC, I would listen to Julie talk to his writers and shoot down story idea after story idea. But he seemed very happy with my scripts.

If Julie likes your story, he'll help you with the plotting. If it had an empty hole, he'd fill it. Which was what I liked least about working with Julie… because I wanted to fill my own holes.

Arlen: *You segued from the Spectre to Deadman, the series, in which you were able to, in your own words, "strut your stuff".*

MENACE of the MYSTIC MASTERMIND!
STARRING THE
Astral Avenger
SPECTRE
IN THE DARKEST DEEDS OF DEVILRY, IN THE SUFFOCATING SHADOW OF RUIN AND DESPAIR, THE ILLUMINATING REALIZATION THAT LIFE AND HOPE CAN AND WILL GROW...
BRIGHTENING WITH THE HARBINGERS OF HOPE, THE ONCE COLD, LIFELESS STARE OF HUMANITY'S PALLIDE BECOMES WITNESS TO THE DARKENING SHADOW OF...THE SPECTRE!

Neal: I was doing the Spectre while Carmine was finishing up the first Deadman. I don't know how interested he was in continuing it. I'm not altogether sure he didn't do the first issue as a throwaway. The Deadman series was only considered to be new, it wasn't considered to be good. It was pretty silly, in a way. But since Deadman was a character so much like the Spectre, I was the logical choice to follow Carmine. I didn't want to give up the Spectre, because the issues and concepts were on a higher plane than Deadman's. But they said, "Deadman's only 18 pages long, couldn't you do them both?" So I said, "Fine."

Arlen: *The cover of the first Deadman story you penciled and inked (*Strange Adventures

(Far left) Full-page from The Spectre #3, Apr '68, featuring guest-star, Wildcat.

(Left) Panel from "Stop That Kid Before He Wrecks The World!", The Spectre #4, Jun '68. This was Adams' first published DC writing.

(Left bottom) Double-page spread from "Fugitive From Justice!", The Spectre #6, Aug '68, Adams' second published script. (Center top) Illustration from San Diego Comic-Con program book.

EEEEE
GREAT COSMOS! I BROUGHT A TYRANNOSAURUS BACK WITH ME AND--UHHH! THERE'S THAT WEAKNESS AGAIN!
...FEEL LIKE A HUMAN WHO HASN'T SLEPT FOR A WEEK...! BUT I'VE GOT TO STOP THAT PREHISTORIC MENACE...SOMEHOW!
...TRY TO DISTRACT HIM...
A TRYANNOSAURUS REX! LOOK...LOOK, MOMMY!
JIMMY, GET AWAY! RUN!!
YIIII! A MONSTER!
A DRAGON!

#207, December 1967) is one of the most groundbreaking covers in the history of comics. The photo-realistic multiple heads in the background were striking enough, printed as a green color hold, but it was the shiny, high-gloss sheen of Deadman's red costume, rendered with crosshatching and brush, that seemed to announce a whole new look in comic book inking.

Neal: One of the things that I brought to comic books was not only the knowledge to do that stuff, but the awareness of what had been done before to build on. I would go to old book shops and buy old comic books and look at artists that didn't work at DC or appear anywhere else. I looked at the old EC comics and believed in them. If you look back at EC, you'll find the same kind of inking. Reed Crandall, Al Williamson, Alex Raymond, all those guys knew how to do that. Frank Frazetta did it all the time.

I had seen all the comic artists, but it seemed they all inked with one kind of line. Everybody

(Below right) Panel from The Heart of Juliet Jones by Stan Drake, note all the different textures rendered by Drake in this single panel

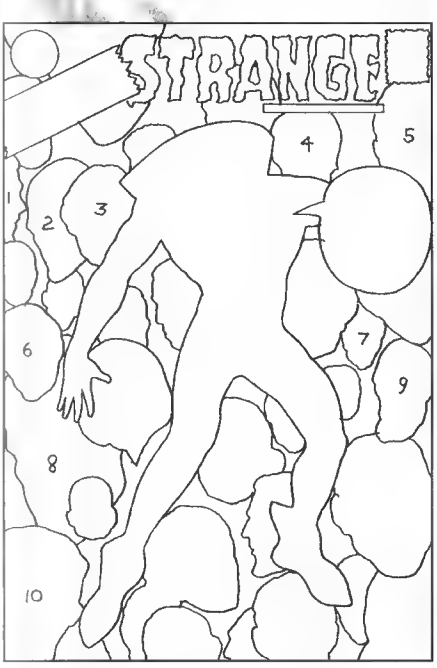
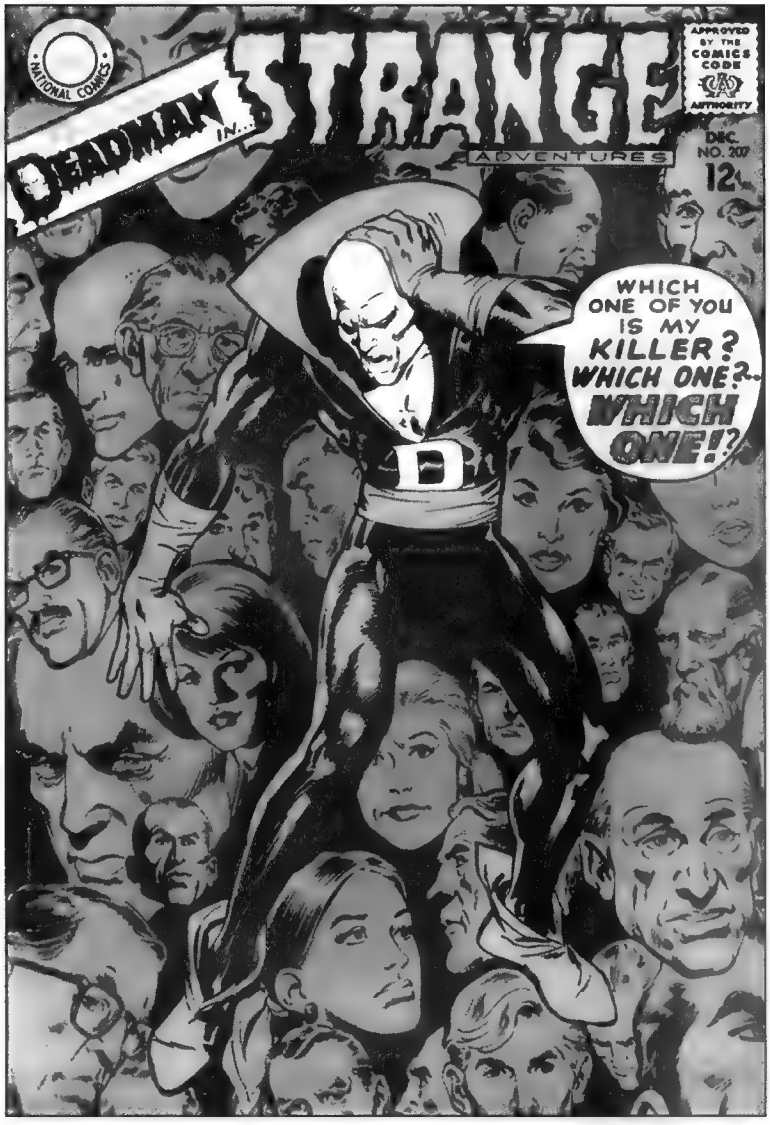
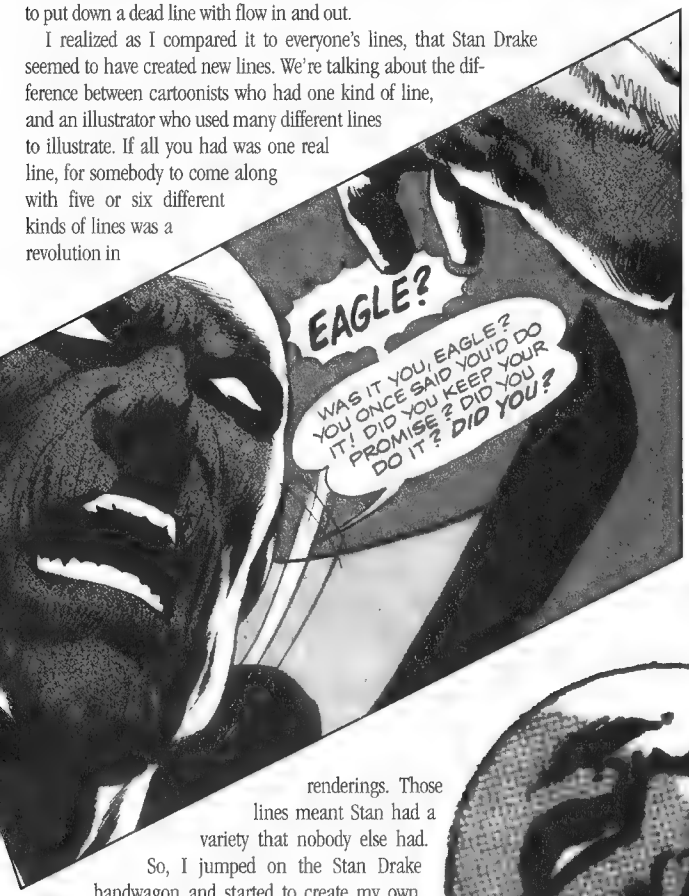


Diagram guide to the faces on the cover of Strange Adventures #207, Dec '67, with comments by Adams· 1) Joe Leterese, DC letterer. 2) Jay Scott Pike 3) Ira Schnappe, DC letterer of the original Superman and Batman logos, created the logos of practically every DC title for over 30 years–a legend. "They forcibly retired him and he went to Florida He wasn't sick a day in his life, but within a half year he was dead." 4) Jerry Serpe, DC co orist and production man. 5) Jack Miller, writer/ editor of Deadman at the time. 6) Jack Adler. 7) Lee Elias-type face. 8) A type of face I began developing during my Ben Casey days; evolved into Ra's Al Ghul. 9) God. 10) Co-head of production at DC, Ed Eisenberg.


NATIONAL COMICS
DEADMAN IN... STRANGE ADVENTURES
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
DEC. NO. 207
12¢
WHICH ONE OF YOU IS MY KILLER? WHICH ONE?.. WHICH ONE!?

basically did that thin-to-thick-to-thin brush stroke. And then I started to study Stan Drake's stuff. He put down a line that would start thin, go thick and stay thick. Or he'd be able to put down a dead line with flow in and out.

I realized as I compared it to everyone's lines, that Stan Drake seemed to have created new lines. We're talking about the difference between cartoonists who had one kind of line, and an illustrator who used many different lines to illustrate. If all you had was one real line, for somebody to come along with five or six different kinds of lines was a revolution in renderings. Those lines meant Stan had a variety that nobody else had. So, I jumped on the Stan Drake bandwagon and started to create my own kinds of lines.



If you render well with these lines, you're able to do more things when you render. You can do textures. You can do wood that looks like wood. Metal that looks like metal. Linen that looks like linen. Lines on hands, as opposed to lines on clothing have a certain softness. They're not cartoons. Better, different textures add a flavor to work that is hard to define by other people.

Arlen: *In these early covers and stories, you ink with a bolder, more cartoony line–cartoonier than Ben Casey or your more mature DC work.*

Neal: My early stuff for DC does look pretty crude, compared to Ben Casey, because I wasn't using photographs. I had taken photographs for Ben Casey because realistic strips required tremendous amounts of soap opera and facial expressions, and I could afford to, because I had the time and money. But, when I did comic books I had no choice but to work without photographs and, in a way, it was like learning a new skill, exercising muscles I hadn't used enough yet. But I was always using muscles. I didn't become mature doing Ben Casey, then "de-mature" at DC, and then mature again. I was simply learning a new way.

"The stark human emo

HA, HA! LOOK AT ME-- I'M BAWLING MY HEART OUT!
BUT THAT'S NUTS-- I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO HAVE ANY FEELINGS!
I'M NOTHING--A ZERO-- A DEAD MAN!... AAHHH-- I COULD BURST!

Arlen: *We had accepted as "realistic" the Marvel Comics super heroes talking about their problems, but they were still drawn cartoonishly. It was the stark human emotion of Deadman rendered almost photo-realistically that opened up everyone's eyes.*

Neal: The idea of taking photographs and turning them into drawings was to learn the humanity of the charac-

tion of Deadman...
I CAN FEEL!
NO! NO! NO! IT CAN'T BE... HE CAN'T HAVE JUST PICKED ME OFF A POSTER... AND KILLED ME AGAIN! WARPED GRADUATION TEST! NO! I WON'T BELIEVE IT!
I LIVE I'M ALIVE

ters. I had worked from photographs so much I'd be able to draw the person inside so the reader would respond to the face and expression as though somebody was in there. Suddenly it wasn't just a drawing on a page, it was a person. And when that person you cared about suddenly felt anguish, you felt it along with them.

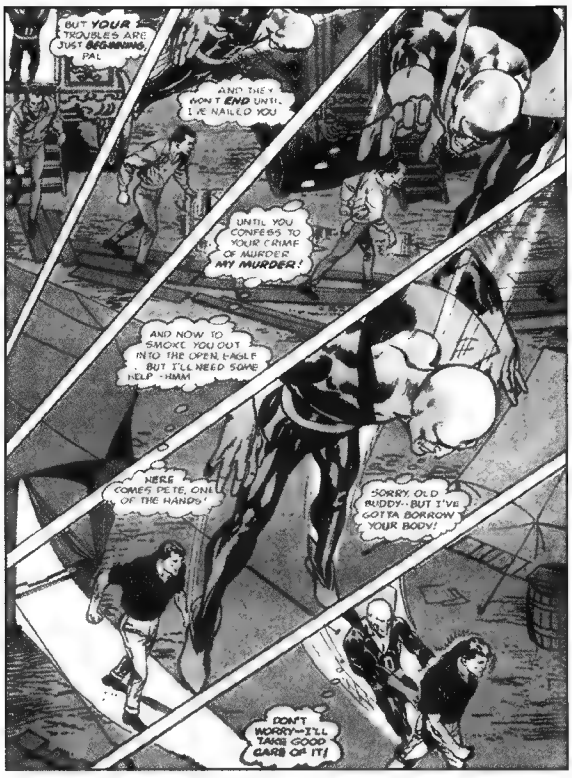
I go through comic books constantly and see characters saying things that don't match the expressions on their faces. Nobody seems to contort their face or feel the emotion. These things get forgotten because many artists are not willing to learn how to draw a face.

Arlen: *Your innovative panel breakdowns and page layouts also had tremendous impact.*

Neal: For three and a half years, I had been drawing daily strips three panels across... which was very constricting. Suddenly the opportunity to design a comic book page was available to me, and I just blasted out. The freedom was incredible. Every time I drew a story, I paced it differently. Maybe the front end moved fast and the back end slowed down. Or maybe it was easy to follow the story with the eye, or I intentionally irritated the reader so it wasn't.

These kinds of storytelling things I learned doing Ben Casey. Since Ben Casey was a soap opera, it wasn't by its nature exciting. How do you bring excitement to the dull? You make the audience think they're getting more than they're actually getting. You go into a close-up, you see details that you might not otherwise see, you create an expression that draws the eye, you move the camera. Design, layout and composition are what keep the audience interested.

I made it


BUT YOUR TROUBLES ARE JUST BEGINNING, PAL
AND THEY WON'T END UNTIL I'VE NAILED YOU
UNTIL YOU CONFESS TO YOUR CRIME OF MURDER MY MURDER!
AND NOW TO SMOKE YOU OUT INTO THE OPEN EAGLE . BUT I'LL NEED SOME HELP -HMM
HERE COMES PETE, ONE OF THE HANDS!
SORRY, OLD BUDDY--BUT I'VE GOTTA BORROW YOUR BODY!
DON'T WORRY--I'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF IT!

my business to find something that would keep the audience interested so they would read the writing. If you've got three pages of talking heads, it's the job of the artist to make those talking heads as interesting as the action. Almost like taking the reader by the shirt front and saying, "Read this!" And if you do your job right, suddenly the audience reads the writer because they're fascinated by the artist's solution to the problem.

This is part of what entertains a reader, that you played with them one way and now you're going to play with them another way. The reader has said, okay, entertain me, but if you bore me, I'm not with you. So the artist has to play the game. The writer has a part in the game but is pretty helpless because it's in the hands of the artist. If the artist can keep the game going, the reader get to the climax and gets the payoff.

And you can tell the artists who haven't studied because they'll blame the writer. They'll say they got a boring script. What it really is, is a boring handle. That's the difficulty… and the challenge.

Arlen: *Can great art save a bad story? Can a great story survive despite bad art?*

Neal: The question is, what is great art? Is great art beautiful drawings, or is great art, art that tells a story well? In a comic book, the goal is the story.

People constantly talk to me about Deadman as though it was the greatest art I ever did, but what they're remembering are the stories. They remember waiting for the next issue, but not for the art. For the story. They're remembering this driving force to find The Hook that accelerated as the story went on. They wanted to know, who was The Hook?

(Top left) Full-page from Strange Adventures #209, Feb '68.
(Below) Ben Casey "hidden head" Sunday page, circa 1965
(Facing page) Deadman "hidden head" page from Strange Adventures #216, Feb '69

BEN CASEY
I WAS SUMMONED BY MR. BERCHEFF, DR. CASEY. I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND.
OF COURSE, DR. MELNIKOFF. I CAN ONLY HOPE YOU VIEW MISS PETROVNA'S CASE AS A MEDICAL PROBLEM!
I WILL BE GLAD TO STATE MY VIEWS, DOCTOR.
YOU'D BETTER HURRY ALONG, BEN. I'D LIKE DR. MELNIKOFF TO HAVE A GOOD LOOK AT MISS PETROVNA.
AS BEN LEAVES CORBA'S OFFICE WITH DR. ALEXIS MELNIKOFF OF THE RUSSIAN EMBASSY...
TELL HIM, COMRADE DOCTOR! TELL HIM YOU WILL TAKE OVER!
BERCHEFF, THIS IS A HOSPITAL. YOUR LOUD NOISES ARE IN POOR TASTE!
HEY... I MIGHT LIKE THIS GUY!
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND YOU, COMRADE DOCTOR MELNIKOFF PERHAPS IF I EXPLAIN
BERCHEFF, GO IN THERE AND WAIT UNTIL I AM READY TO TALK TO YOU!
LATER...
I CONCUR COMPLETELY, DR. CASEY. INTERCRANIAL HEMORRHAGE... YOU SHOULD OPERATE IMMEDIATELY...
AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT BERCHEFF--
--HE IS OUT OF HIS ELEMENT, AND I SHALL ENJOY TELLING HIM SO!
THANK YOU, DR. MELNIKOFF! AND IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'LL CONSIDER THIS A TRIUMPH OF MEDICINE OVER IDEOLOGY!
LOVELY PETROVNA... WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL SHE IS IN GOOD HANDS, BERCHEFF!
BELIEVE ME GORONKIN, MOSCOW WILL HEAR ABOUT THIS!

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE IN CHARGE OF THE BALANCE OF GOOD AND EVIL IN NATURE! WELL, LOOK, JACK, YOU'VE DONE A CRUMMY JOB!!
GIVE ME A SHOT AT IT! I'LL CLEAN THINGS UP! THEN, AND ONLY THEN, WILL I REST EASY!
HEY! MY HANDS ARE DISSOLVING, RAAAMA! CUT IT OUT!
HUH? THEY'RE OKAY NOW! WHAT'S GOIN' ON?
COME FORWARD, BOSTON BRAND!
YOUR PROTESTATIONS RING WITH THE TRUTH!
YOU, DEADMAN, SHALL GO FORTH AND ROOT OUT THOSE POCKETS OF INFAMY UNTIL YOUR SOUL AND MY JUDGMENT RECOGNIZE THE BALANCE ONCE AGAIN!

OKAY, RAMA, I COULDN'T MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR SECRETARY SO I BARGED RIGHT IN! 'SCUSE IT!
ALL REALITY IS YOUR CALLING DEADMAN. SO BE IT! I SEE YOU WILL NOT BE HAPPY IN PARBAT! THEREFORE YOU MAY COME TO ME FOR YOUR FINAL REST! I SHALL GRANT IT!
THOSE RAYS... RISING TOWARD ME...

AND I'M NOT ASKING YOU TO LET ME STICK AROUND, I'M TELLING YOU... NO... DEMANDING YOU LET ME STAY!
IN CASE YOU FORGOT, I NEVER ASKED TO STAY AROUND TO FIND MY KILLER!
SELFISH, DEADMAN! AFTER ALL YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN...
I NEVER ASKED TO BE SHOWN HOW LOUSED UP THIS WORLD IS... HOW FULL OF KILLERS, THIEVES, CON MEN, DRUG ADDICTS AND ASSASSINS! BUT YOU SHOWED IT TO ME! I ASKED FOR NOTHING!
MONKEY GRIT! WAS WHAT HAPPENED TO HOOK PART OF YOUR GIFT TO ME? A GIFT OF FUTILITY!!

SAME CONDITIONS AS BEFORE?
SAME CONDITIONS! BUT AS YOU NOW KNOW... NOT ALL HUMANS ARE VULNERABLE TO YOUR CONTROL!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO REMIND ME!
YOU ALSO HAVE WEAKNESSES WHICH UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES... NO... I CAN SAY NO MORE!
THANKS! I NEEDED MORE PROBLEMS!

Arlen: *Arnold Drake scripted the first Deadman story, and editor Jack Miller wrote some of the follow-on issues, but then the writing history becomes fuzzy.*

Neal: Drake was doing some other stuff, so Miller started to write Deadman, which got Drake upset, so he wrote a story which was rejected as being too far away from his original concept. Miller's writing was quite good and more soap opera-like.

Then suddenly Deadman got all the attention in the world and everybody wanted to write a Deadman story. People like Bob Kanigher were handing in scripts that took Deadman in random directions. Then Miller was let go for reasons unknown, something on the "editor" level.

At that point, I talked to (incoming editor) Dick Giordano and asked if I could submit stories, because each time someone submitted Deadman stories, the character seemed different, and I was afraid the series would get lost right at the beginning. Dick said fine, and from that point on, I was writing Deadman, and the series became more consistent.

I was able to experiment more since I could design the overall story from scratch. I began placing more significance on Rama Kushna. Because Deadman was always up front ranting, her development went forward unnoticed.

Arlen: *The series was abruptly canceled in late 1968, just as we were beginning to learn about Rama Kushna and the Shanghai La-like land of Nanda Parbat. And all subsequent versions of Deadman by others never followed up on what you had started.*

Neal: No one picked up the pieces I left in plain sight. Rama Kushna was meddling with human affairs quite a bit for a god… if she was a god. What was her real goal? And why did Deadman become solid when he went to Nanda Parbat? Why was the Sensei

able to detect him and ward him off? Is death just another plane of existence? Was Deadman truly a dead man?

Arlen: *Your final issue of Deadman (*Strange Adventures *#216, February 1969) featured some of your most psychedelic artwork, including the odd "HEY, A JIM STERANKO EFFECT" panel. What did you think of Steranko's work?*

Neal: What Jim Steranko did at the time had almost no relationship to what I did. We weren't in competition. We weren't trying to do the same thing.

He was definitely a graphic illustrator. His goal was to create new and impactful images graphically. Steranko was looking to punch you in the face. That came from Kirby.

I was coming from a more traditional background and direction. I tended to do a better drawing. He decried realism except where it related to graphics. Graphics were not my only focus. They weren't his only focus either, but they were certainly overpowering. I was doing many other things, level after level. I was thrilled with the page, thrilled with the opportunity to experiment, as was Steranko. He was, in some ways, much more aggressive.

He was also very aware of the modern world. His work says, in effect, "Wake up everybody! Don't you know we're here?" When I did the Steranko effect panel in Deadman, I was tipping my hat to him. I never felt in any way competitive. I felt we were a community. Like Steranko, I was somebody with a reasonable knowledge of things that were common outside of comic books suddenly stepping into the field and BAM!, slapping everybody in the face.

HEY! AM I NUTS OR ARE THOSE STAIRS UPSIDE DOWN?
NOT THAT IT MAKES ANY DIFFERENCE, 'CAUSE I'M GOIN' UP THERE NO MATTER WHAT!
MEBBE I CAN TAKE A SHORT CUT THRU THIS JOINT!
GRAPPLIN' HOOK... DON'T FAIL ME NOW!
SO, OKAY! I GOT A COUPLA MORE POINTS ON MY SCORE-CARD! SO THAT AND A DIME'LL BUY ME COFFEE!
I'M NOTHIN' IF I CAN'T MAKE IT THROUGH WHATEVER'S AHEAD!
THE NEXT BREATH I TAKE COULD GET ME A BELLYFUL OF POISON GAS!
THAT GUY DAREDEVIL OUGHTTA TAKE SOME LESSONS FROM ME!
NEED SOMETHIN' NOW TA GET THRU THE ROOF! AND AN ACID PELLET SHOULD DO THE JOB JUST RIGHT!
OKAY, FURY... SECOND INNING!
WHEW! LOOKS LIKE SOMETHIN' OUT OF AN OLD BELA LUGOSI FLICK!
THE WALLS MUST BE RIGGED TA CLOSE WHEN WEIGHT TOUCHES THE FLOOR!
NO PROBLEM FER ME TA SWITCH ON THE MAGNETIC COILS IN MY BOOTS!
JUST WATCH YER STEP, FURY!
THE NEXT DOOR I OPEN COULD GET ME BLOWN FROM HERE TO KINGDOM COME!
I GOTTA MAKE IT ALL THE WAY... OR DIE TRYIN'!

BBBZZZZZZZ!
HUH! UH... OH, YEAH! OKAY, VAL! TELL THE GARAGE TA GET MY CAR WARMED UP!
SORRY, NICK! YOUR NEW BERLINETTA'S HAVING AN ARSENAL INSTALLED! USE MY XK-E! AND IF YOU'RE NOT TOO BUSY, DROP THE CAR OFF AT MY PLACE LATER! LOVE AND KISSES, BOSS MAN!

Adams vs. Steranko?
All Adams art from Strange Adventures #216; Steranko full-page from Strange Tales #166, Mar '68; single panel (with woman's face on screen) from Strange Tales #168, May '68.

"When I came into comic books, they were in the dark ages."

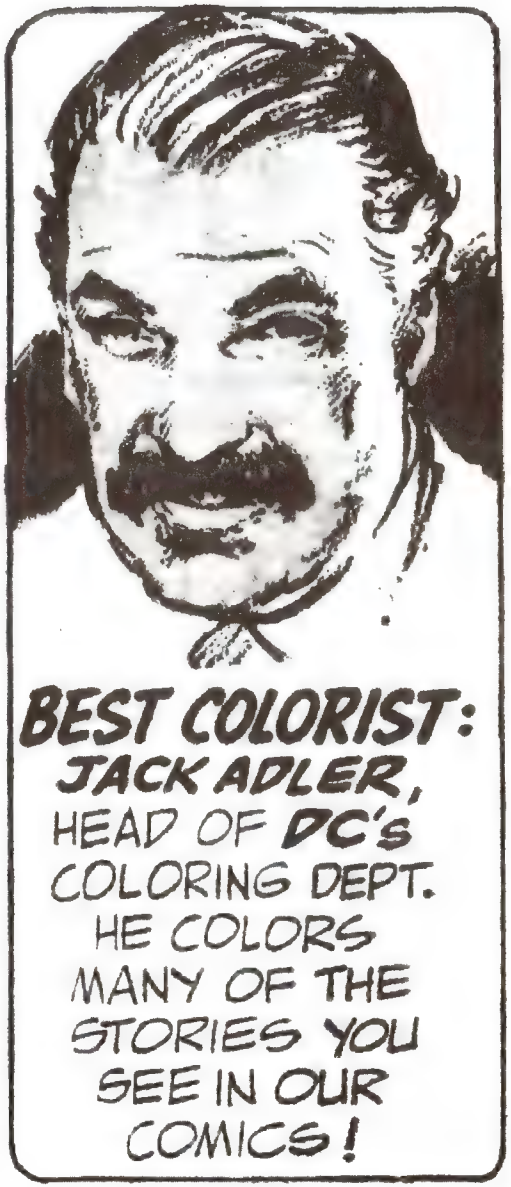
When I came into comic books, they were in the dark ages. They knew nothing. I lived in the real world, but suddenly I walked into this place where the door was closed. Well, through that door was a Neanderthal business. The people in charge were editors who had no real artistic sense. They just knew that artists came in and handed in pages, and you printed the pages as long as the story made sense.

I would go into the production room with my pages and they would have the production guys color 'em. It was my experience that they had little or no talent, and certainly no training. They seemed to be an uneducated coloring group doing the job of coloring. In those days, you could open up a DC comic book and not tell if a scene took place at day or night! You can almost understand why some artists didn't aspire to do a better job when the quality of the color was so bad. And it would go on forever, the same kind of dullness, unchallenged. How do you stop that? How do you imply that coloring was important? You couldn't.

Arlen: *So how did you?*

Neal: I made friends with the best colorist there–Jack Adler. He cared more than most production guys. He showed me how they did their colors, and I was fascinated. We were able to talk about color separations and halftone dots because I knew about them from the advertising business. And we would talk over color theory, about how to take advantage of the limited palette that was available.

We'd color other colorist's stuff. A certain job could come through poorly colored; I'd convince Jack to give me the extra stats; I'd recolor it, and we'd hand in the pages that I colored. The original colorist was paid, but rarely compared his coloring to the finished book. Then Jack started to do the same thing, as his own coloring got better. DC didn't know what was going on, but somehow the books were looking better.



Arlen: *How did you achieve the range and richness in your coloring that give your work the appearance of being hand colored, not mechanically screen separated?*

Neal: First off, I simply increased the range of coloring to its potential. At first I was told by Sol Harrison that if too much color was printed, the colors would tend to slip as they sat on one another and bind the machine.

"But Sol," I said, "this isn't the New York Times Magazine where the colors sit on top of good paper, we're printing on toilet paper here." Moisture from the color gets absorbed immediately through newsprint. So Sol gave me permission to put some heavier colors in. Suddenly my stories were showing up with more different colors than anybody else had.

But I hadn't solved the real problem. Marvel Comics had twice as many colors as DC, 64 as opposed to 32, simply because they had two additional yellow tones, 50% and 25%. Sol told me Marvel was paying extra to get tone yellow. That didn't make any sense to me. So I "suggested" to Carmine and editors like Joe Orlando that they ask Jack Liebowitz, the owner of DC Comics, why Marvel was getting twice as many colors as DC.

The next day, Jack Liebowitz storms into Harrison's office, yelling, "What the hell is this? Marvel's getting twice as many colors as we're getting?"

"But they're paying more for it," Sol answered.

Jack Adler portrait by Adams for house ad, "DC Sweeps A.C.B.A. Awards," running in November '71 issues

NEAL Adams

COLORS & COVERS

Note the incredible detail and the effect "frozen action" that Adams used on the cover of House of Mystery #177 Nov/Dec 1968.

© 1996 DC

DC Special #6
Jan/Mar 1970

Tomahawk
#116 May/Jun
1968

Strange
Adventures
#217 Mar/Apr
1969

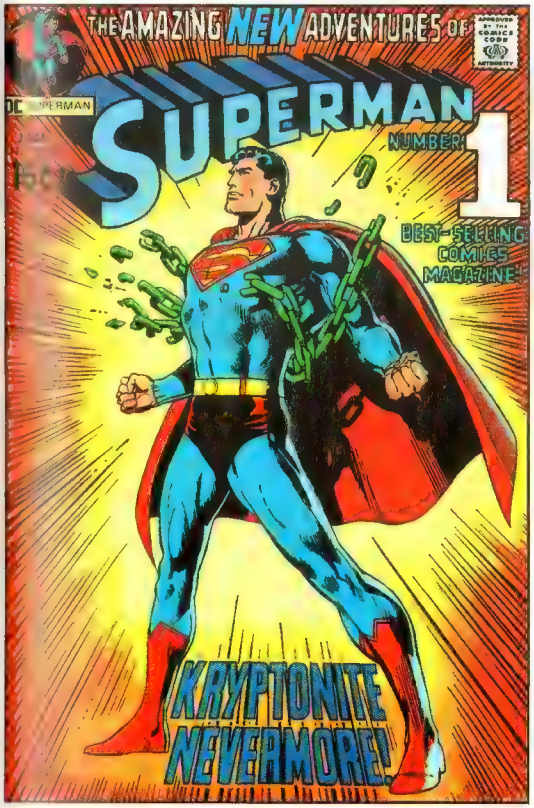
Strange
Adventures
#213 Jul/Aug
1968

ALL COVERS, CHARACTERS, LOGOS, AND TITLES © 1998 DC

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE HONORABLE JOHN V. LINDSAY, MAYOR OF NEW YORK CITY
ONLY 25¢ bigger & better
NOV.
GREEN LANTERN
CO-STARRING
GREEN ARROW
MORE DEADLY THAN THE ATOM BOMB!
WINNER of ACADEMY AWARD for BEST COMIC!

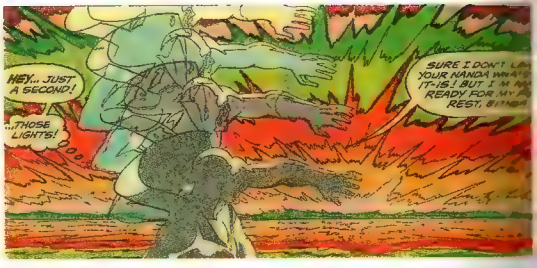
Strange Adventures #207 Dec 1967

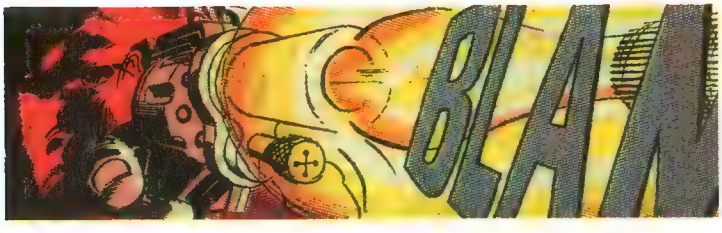
Green Lantern #86 Oct/Nov 1971



Superman #233 Jan 1971

DC Special #4 Jul/Sep 1969





"People don't know good coloring fr they like something. And good colo

"You think that cheap blankity-blank over there is paying more for his bleeping comic books than I am?" Liebowitz told Sol to call the color separator who separated both Marvel and DC. The separator says, "You want tone yellow? You got it." They were, of course, charging Marvel the same prices, which means that from 1941 to 1967, DC had been printing with only half the colors available to them. But on that very day, DC Comics had twice as many colors as they had the day before.

Arlen: *One of the stylistic effects you shared with Steranko was the use of zipatone shading film.*

Neal: I thought of zipatone as simply another color, not as an "effect". If I wanted a gradated gray, how would I possibly get that in comic book color? I'd do it with zipatone. If I wanted to throw a shadow over an area and do it evenly to alter the color, I'd do it with zipatone. It surprised people, I suppose.

None of it was a surprise to me. Zipatone was available to everybody. Every one of the artists in those days could have done this stuff, if they had studied.

Arlen: *In mid-'68 you debut a long string of incredible covers for Joe Orlando's DC mystery books.*

Neal: Carmine hired Joe as an editor and gave him the mystery books, basically stories that had been lying around on the shelf. Joe came to me and said, "I need somebody to do covers for me that will bring some attention to the books." So I pumped a kind of pseudo-Norman Rockwell quality into them, little kids being scared by things that were nothing like what DC had on its covers.

I liked the idea that I could depart from the superhero zone and play with

WAIT! WAIT A MINUTE ... WHAT'S THAT PACKAGE?
IT'S A GAME, A WORD GAME! YOU MAKE WORDS OUT OF SEVEN LETTERS... AWW, IT'S TOO COMPLICATED TO EXPLAIN!
WAIT! HOLD IT, IS IT HARD TO LEARN?
NAA... I COULD TEACH YOU IN FIVE MINUTES!
WOULD YOU TEACH ME?
SURE!
AND THEY PLAYED THE GAME... THEY MADE WORDS AND POINTS ... AND THEY ARGUED AND INSISTED AND DEN-IED AND TELLED FOR HOURS!
THAT'S NOT A WORD!
NO PERSONAL NAMES! IT SAYS SO IN THE RULE BOOK!
IT IS SO, DUMMY... EVERYBODY KNOWS WHAT AN "EON" IS!
HA HA! I WON!
FINALLY...
TWO OUT OF THREE GAMES!

om bad coloring, but they know when ring does make you like something."

lighting and shadows and coloring. I've always been a fan of Toulouse-Lautrec because he used colors in ways that most people haven't, but unlike Lautrec I made an effort to create a sense of three-dimensionality with the color.

Suddenly everybody was buying these books because of the covers.

Arlen: *You also did 19 Phantom Stranger covers in a row.*

Neal: I guess I fell for the mystery thing.

Arlen: *Between those covers, all the Superman family covers you were doing, and various other titles, like Tomahawk, it seemed like you were the de facto house artist for DC Comics.*

Neal: They never thought of me that way. To tell the truth, they felt Marvel comics crawling up their back. They knew they needed something new going on. I was the only new thing around, and they spread me as far as they could.

Arlen: *But were you willing to be spread?*

Neal: It was fine with me. When you work with people and they make requests of you, you can't, in the middle of saying yes five times, suddenly say no. The editors were constantly on me, "You've got to do this cover! I really need to get this cover done!" Truthfully, it seemed I was needed. But you can hear that conversation an awful lot before you start to think, maybe you're doing too many covers.

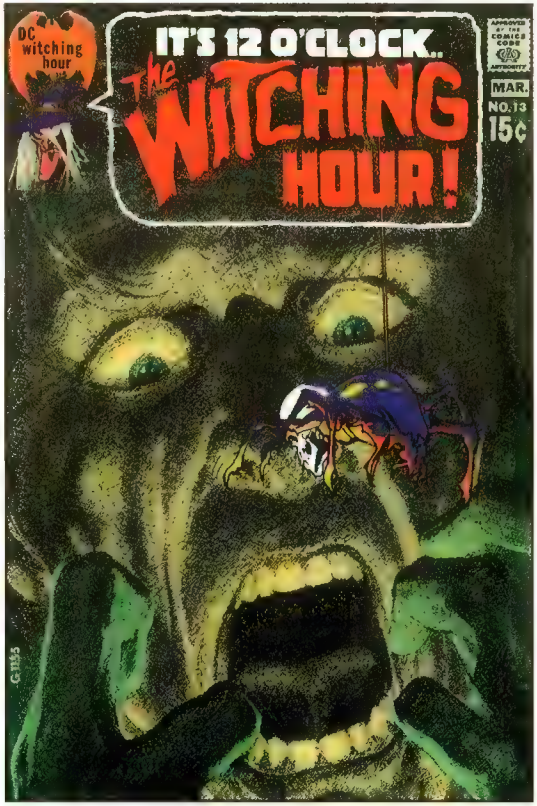
Facing page clockwise from upper left: Splash panel from House of Mystery #186 May/Jun 1970, Strange Adventures #216 Jan/Feb 1969, page 14; Strange Adventures #208 Jan 1968, page 12; Brave & Bold #93 Dec/Jan 1970/71, page 22;Brave & Bold #79 Aug/Sep 1968, page 1
This page clockwise from upper left: Strange Adventures #211 Apr 1968, page 16; House of Mystery #178 Jan/Feb 1969, page 5; and Green Lantern #89 Apr/May 1972, page 18.

House of Mystery #189 Nov/Dec 1970

Unexpected #110 Dec/Jan 1968/69

House of Secrets #88 Oct/Nov 1970

Witching Hour! #13 Feb/Mar 1971



ALL COVERS CHARACTERS, LOGOS AND TITLES © 1996 DC

Showcase #80
Feb 1969

Phantom
Stranger #13
May/Jun 1971

Phantom
Stranger #10
Nov/Dec 1970

Phantom
Stranger #17
Jan/Feb 1972

Detective Comics
BATMAN and ROBIN
COMMISSIONER GORDON!
BAT MAN
BATMAN
BATGIRL
GHOST OF THE KILLER SKIES!
featuring ENEMY ACE
BATMAN
SEEK BATMAN OUT, AT PETE'S— AND DESTROY HIM!
DC 100 SUPER SPECTACULAR
ONLY 50¢
Detective COMICS
NIGHT OF THE STALKER
BAT MAN
HA HA HA
HA HA HA
LOOK OUT GOTHAM! JOKER'S BACK IN TOWN!
400th
SMASH TISSUE!
Detective Comics
BATMAN ROBIN BATGIRL
CHALLENGE OF THE MAN-BAT!
BAT MAN
I'M INNOCENT! I HAVE NO ACTUAL MAYHEM AND I CAN PROVE IT WITH A GUN
BATMAN WITH ROBIN THE TEEN WONDER
WHEN I DECIDE ROBIN MUST DIE—
—HE DIES!
A TALE TO HAUNT YOU FOREVER—
DAUGHTER OF THE DEMON
Detective Comics
BATMAN and ROBIN
MAN OR BAT!
BAT MAN
EXTRA!
THERE ARE 8 MILLION PEOPLE IN GOTHAM CITY— UNLESS BATMAN FINDS THE RIGHT ONE— AT DAWN DIES MARY K. QUEEN!
Detective Comics
BATMAN and BATGIRL
featuring the LEAGUE of ASSASSINS!
TARGET: BATMAN!

"DC had this problem with Batman..."

DC had this problem with Batman. The stupid television show was doing great, but the comic books weren't selling.

People were ghosting for Bob Kane and Batman wasn't getting any better. Even Carmine's version didn't make it for me. I never really liked Batman after Jerry Robinson and Dick Sprang left.

But I felt part of my job was to help DC Comics, so I went to Julie Schwartz and said I'd like to do a Batman story. He basically kicked me out of his office. Julie probably had reasons for saying no, maybe they had to do with Kane's contractual obligations with DC.

So I talked to Murray Boltinoff, who edited *Brave and Bold*, which had a Batman team-up in every issue. I had done Jerry Lewis for him and he received the kudos from DC, so he was ready for me to do anything. "Let's team Batman up with Deadman," I said, 'cause I was already doing Deadman.

BATMAN
HOT-LINE CALL, BATMAN! LET'S GET GOING!
NOT TONIGHT, KID! I'M STAYING IN THE BATCAVE TO WATCH MYSELF ON TELEVISION!
THE ADVENTURES OF BAT-MAN
IS TELEVISION UP TO ITS GREATEST CHALLENGE?
By Eric F. Goldman
TV GUIDE
POW

Batman cover by Infantino/Joe Giella, 1966 TV Guide cover from 66. World's Finest cover by Adams, '68

Arlen: *You had dabbled with the Batman earlier in '68, on a couple of* World's Finest *covers and in a few stories, but they didn't seem to be on the same artistic level as Deadman.*

Neal: I was showing the editors I could do the covers, but there was an insistence that I then do the stories. And I was

reluctant, because I had no interest in doing Batman at that time. You can tell from looking at him that I wasn't focused. When Batman appears he looks like Superman in a pretty ugly costume.

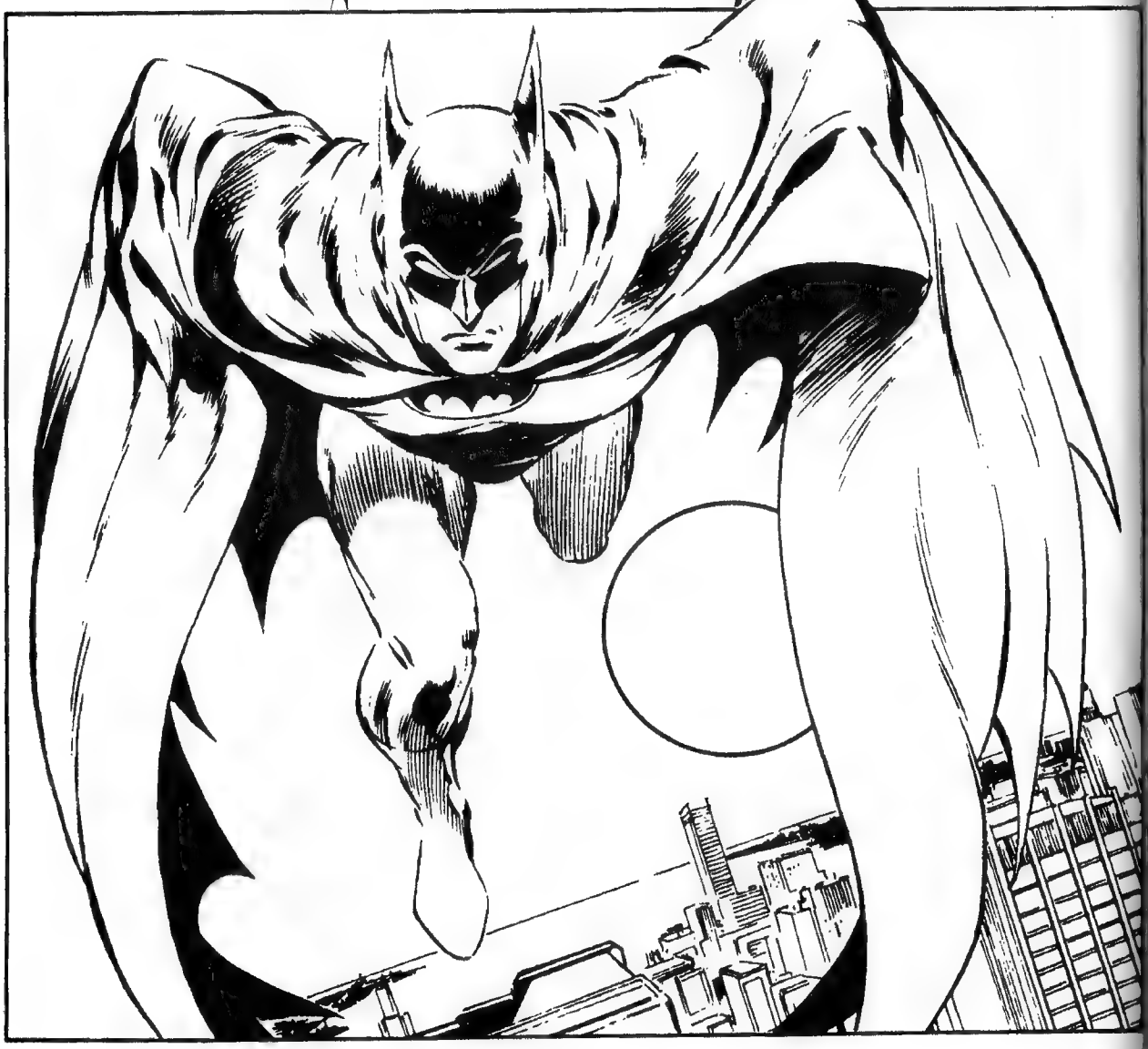
Arlen: *Yet soon after, when you began drawing Batman full-time in* Brave and Bold, *you return him to his original creature-of-the-night persona right from the start.*

Neal: I got to like Batman. As I went along, one of the first things that occurred to me was Batman was supposed to look like a bat. I had bat photographs in my reference file and I loved the way bats flew. I loved the way birds flew. There was something inspirational about the way they flew that it was clear to me that this was part of what Batman was about.

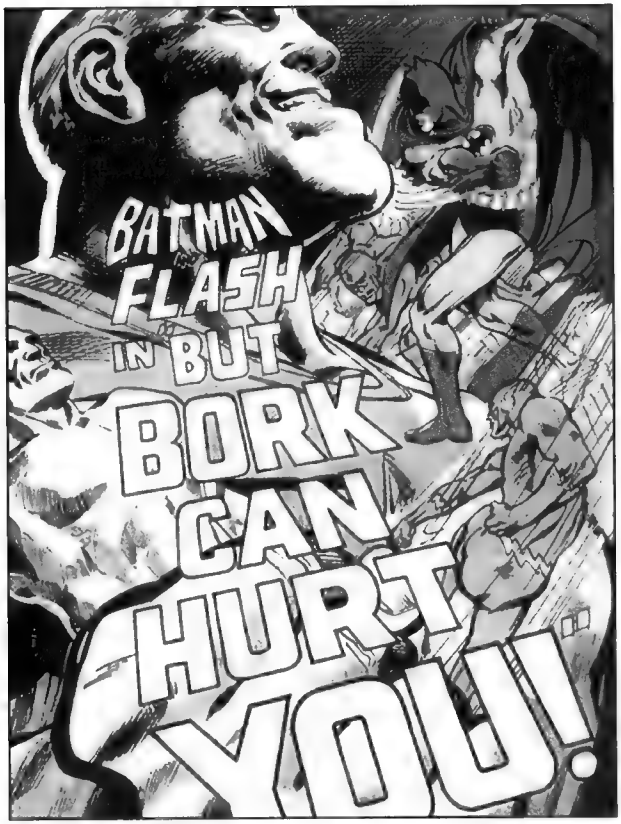
I used to haunt 42nd Street when the new Hammer films were playing, with Christopher Lee as Dracula. There was one scene I remember that just threw me. The camera was above a balcony, looking down on Lee as a coach leaves from the gate. Lee's wearing this long cape, and as the coach leaves, he turns. But before he turns, he makes this subtle move, and the cape catches the wind, swirls around and follows him as he goes off screen. I thought, that's the way Batman's cape ought to move. It should become this living thing. And so that's what I did immediately.

Months later, Julie Schwartz comes down the hall at me with letters from kids saying the only Batman at DC Comics is in Brave and Bold, and asks me what makes me think I know how Batman ought to look? I said, "Julie, it's not just me that knows what Batman ought to be, it's me and every kid in America. The only people that don't know what Batman ought to be are the people here at DC Comics."

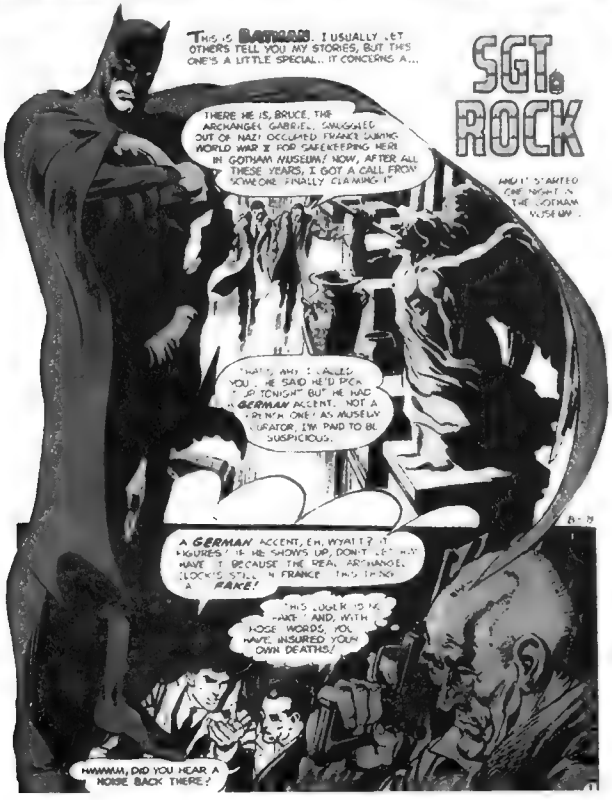
(Lft pg., top) Batman sketch circa '72 (Printed in '73 NY Comicon program book). (Bottom) Cover art to Batman #240, inked by Bernie Wrightson. (Rt pg., lft panel) From Brave & Bold #84, Jun '69. (Top rt) From Detective #404, October '70, inked by Dick Giordano. (Rt bottom) From Brave & Bold #93, Jan '71.



ZING
AIEEE! EL HOMBRE MURCIELAGO!*
SPANG
TH... THE BATMAN!


BATMAN & FLASH IN BUT
BORK CAN HURT YOU!

YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM A DEADMAN!
THEN...


SGT. ROCK
THIS IS BATMAN. I USUALLY LET OTHERS TELL YOU MY STORIES, BUT THIS ONE'S A LITTLE SPECIAL.. IT CONCERNS A...
THERE HE IS, BRUCE. THE ARCHANGEL GABRIEL, SMUGGLED OUT OF NAZI OCCUPIED FRANCE DURING WORLD WAR II FOR SAFEKEEPING HERE IN GOTHAM MUSEUM! NOW, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, I GOT A CALL FROM SOMEONE FINALLY CLAIMING IT
AND I STARTED ONE NIGHT IN THE GOTHAM MUSEUM...
WHAT'S MY NAME? CALL'D YOU A SAID HE'D PICK IT UP TONIGHT" BUT HE HAD A GERMAN ACCENT. NOT A PRIMA ONE! AS MUSEUM CURATOR, I'M PAID TO BE SUSPICIOUS.
A GERMAN ACCENT, EH, WYATT? IT FIGURES! IS HE SHOWS UP, DON'T LET HIM HAVE IT BECAUSE THE REAL ARCHANGEL CLOCKS STILL IN FRANCE. THIS IS NOW A FAKE!
THIS LOOK IS MINE AND, WITH THOSE WORDS, YOU HAVE INSURED YOUR OWN DEATHS!
HMMMM, DID YOU HEAR A HORSE BACK THERE?

THUS, OUT OF STARK NECESSITY, IS BORN THE STRANGEST ALLIANCE OF ALL: THE CAPED CRUSADER AND THE CREEPER...
ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE NOT RELATED TO THE JOKER?
OKAY, MY INSTINCTS TELL ME TO MAKE A DEAL WITH YOU. CREEPER! WE LEAVE IT TO HELLGRAMMITE BUT ONLY IF YOU'LL BE RIGHT BACK AFTER
HAHAHA
HA! HA! A DEAL, LARGE DADDY!
"HA" I FIGURED DALMO HAD THE "CONTRACT" TO KILL ACE BRANGAN FOR MUSCLING IN ON THE MUGGING RACKET!
WHAT ABOUT CREEPER?
SHORTLY AS THE BAT-SIGNAL CALLS GOTHAM'S GUARDIAN TO COMMISSIONER GORDON'S OFFICE
BUT AT BATMAN'S HEADQUARTERS
AGAIN FOR HELP OR PROTECTION
THEN ALL BRANGAN'S BOYS ARE DEAD, EVEN THE SCARED DALMO SAYS ACE'S BEEN SNOOPING AROUND! I CAN YOU GET OUT THERE AND PROTECT HIM?
FINE. WHAT'S A WILL WE CAN DO? CAN YOU MAKE IT? NO
I'VE GOT A HUNCH CREEPER BETTER BE WITH ME ON THIS. GOOD THING I GAVE HIM A BAT-RADIO!
BATMAN TO CREEPER. BATMAN TO CREEPER.
I'LL COMMISSIONER I'LL PROTECT DALMO AS AN HONEST PILLAR OF GOTHAM CITY SOCIETY!
HE'S WE'RE AN

MY OTHER IDENTITY... AS GREEN ARROW... I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN IT! IT'S BEEN SOME TIME... LIKE SOMETHING FROM ANOTHER LIFE... I HAVEN'T EVEN GOTTEN ANY USE OUT OF THIS NEW COSTUME I HAD MADE UP!

Arlen: *The eight issues of* Brave & Bold *you drew are as memorable for the great stories by Bob Haney as they are for your art.*

Neal: Bob Haney wrote a lot of good stories. But he tended to write too much for a story, and you get lost in the details. I tended to focus his stories and make them more direct. People remember the Bob Haney *Brave & Bolds*. They all had great beginnings and great endings. They had drama in the middle. They had flesh and meat and potatoes. They were all strong.

Arlen: *Your recreation of Green Arrow in* Brave & Bold *was startling–the first superhero with facial hair, making him very much of his time.*

Neal: When Green Arrow was offered as a co-star with Batman in *B&B*, Murray Boltinoff did it with a little embarrassment. I had one question: could I give him a new costume? Murray said sure, and had Haney write it into the script.

When I was a kid, I loved Green Arrow, but he had two major faults. Jack Kirby fixed one of them in a two-part story (the only one he did), in which he refocused on GA's incredible arrows. The second fault was his… look.

In my mind, GA was a modern-day Robin Hood–like, duh–so that's what I made him into. Leather jerkin, Robin's hat, Al Williamson boots, and a neat beard. To make him different from traditional Robin Hoods, I made him blonde.

Arlen: *Following the fan reaction to Batman in* Brave &

(Lft page, top left) Splash page from B&B #81, Jan '69, inked by Vince Colletta & Adams. Adams: "But Bork can Hurt You!" was not the original title. Haney wrote this great line in the story that goes, 'You can't hurt Bork, but Bork can hurt you!' And I thought what a great line! So I went to Murray Boltinoff and said I'd really like to use it as the title. He let me do it because, basically, he was letting me do an awful lot of stuff he might not have otherwise allowed if I was somebody else. What's amazing about that issue is how many people remember that title!" (Top right) Splash from B&B #86, Nov '69. (Bottom lft) Splash from B&B #84 Jul '69. (Bottom right) Full-page from B&B #80, Oct '68, inked by Giordano. (Rt page, lft panel) From B&B #85, Sep '69. (Rt top & bottom) early Sketches of Green Arrow originally published in Comics Interview #91, '91.

"I really like Batman...

Bold, *Schwartz teams you up with writer Denny O'Neil in late '69 to begin a 4-year run of solo Batman stories. During this run, you got to do your takes on classic foes - Two-Face and the Joker, and new foes, Ra's Al Ghul, and Man-Bat, that have become classics.*

Neal: It was my intention to reinvent Batman and bring back all the good stuff, so if I only got one shot at doing the old villains, I would try to do definitive versions. I pulled out the stops. I did things with the Joker, for example, that I always had in my mind, like putting him in a shark's mouth.

Denny O'Neil and Frank Robbins helped me add to the legend. Denny originally wrote Ra's Al Ghul as a regular guy. I went through nip-ups trying to create a visual of this non-costumed "guy". But in the end I "found" him.

As for Man-Bat, the door was opened and I ushered him in.

Arlen: *What do you mean? How was Man-Bat created?*

Neal: It was a sunny day and Frank Robbins had gone through his three plots and Julie rejected them all. Which Julie had a tendency to do. Robbins didn't want to leave without having a story nailed down, but Julie was a very patient editor, so they just sat there in the same position for an hour, grunting ideas back and forth.

Julie turned to me in the middle of this and said, "Hey, Adams, got any ideas?" So, I said, "Yeah, I have a great idea." He said, "Nah, you're kidding." I said, "Okay, forget it." Then

Large Batman bust from Batman #245, Oct '72. Facing page. (Top - left to right) Two-Face head from Batman #234, Aug '71, inked by Giordano. Joker head, splash page from Batman #251, Sep '73. Ra's Al Ghul head from Batman #244, Sep '72, inked by Giordano. (Center) Actual size thumbnail sketch of Two-Face head Panel from Batman #251. Actual size thumbnail sketch of Ra's Al Ghul from cover of Batman #232, Jun '71 (Bottom) The first idea for Man-Bat, published in Theakston's Neal Adams Treasury #2, '79 Man-Bat head from Detective #407, Jan '71, inked by Giordano. First Man-Bat cover, 1970.

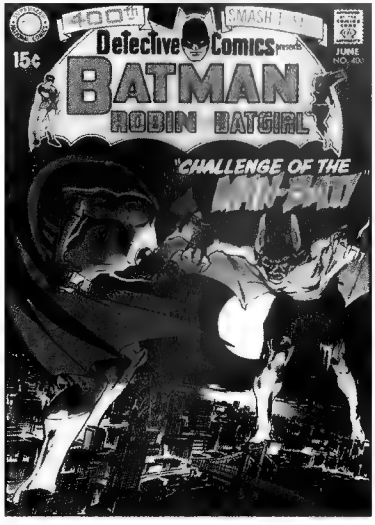
...he became my character."

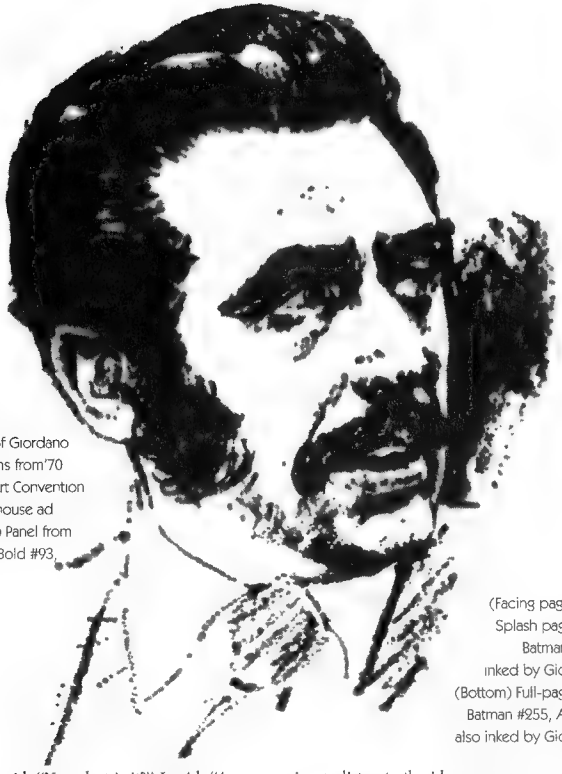
THE COIN HAS DECIDED! THE EVIL PART OF MY NATURE WINS... AND SO TWO-FACE MUST STRIKE!

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

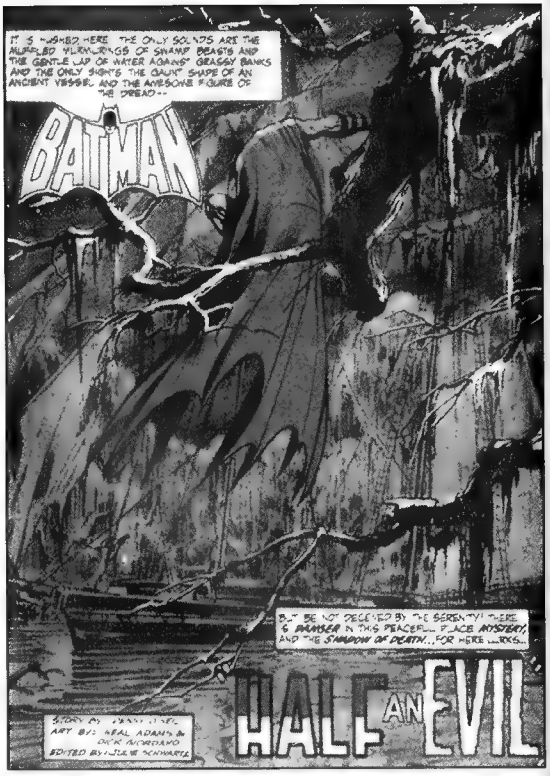
HOW DOES A SH
HE LOSES HIS
A SHARKCANN
IIS TEETH BECA
TEETH ARE ARC
MONEY TO TAKE

DEAT
BATM
BIR
MAN


400th
SMASH
Defective Comics
15¢
BATMAN
ROBIN BATGIRL
"CHALLENGE OF THE
MAN-BAT!"



Portrait of Giordano by Adams from '70 Comic Art Convention awards house ad (Bottom) Panel from Brave & Bold #93, Jan '71.


IT IS HUSHED HERE. THE ONLY SOUNDS ARE THE MUFFLED MURMURINGS OF SWAMP BEASTS AND THE GENTLE LAP OF WATER AGAINST GRASSY BANKS AND THE ONLY SIGHTS THE GAUNT SHAPE OF AN ANCIENT VESSEL, AND THE AWESOME FIGURE OF THE DREAD--
BATMAN
BUT BE NOT DECEIVED BY THE SERENITY! THERE IS DANGER IN THIS PEACEFUL PLACE! MYSTERY! AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH!...FOR HERE LURKS...
STORY BY: [illegible]
ART BY: NEAL ADAMS & DICK GIORDANO
EDITED BY: JULIUS SCHWARTZ
HALF AN EVIL

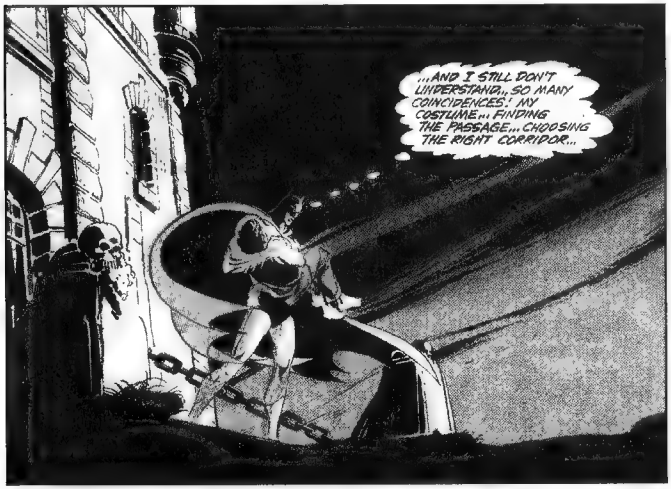
(Facing page, top) Splash page from Batman #234, inked by Giordano. (Bottom) Full-page from Batman #255, Apr '74, also inked by Giordano.

Frank said, "No, what is it?" I said, "Are you going to listen to the idea or are you going to hock me?" They grudgingly listened.

"There's this scientist who's a big fan of Batman. So big that he's dedicated his work to coming up with an extract from bats that can make Batman a real bat-man, by taking on the abilities of a bat. Through a bizarre circumstance he takes the serum himself and turns into a man-bat!" Doesn't sound like a big deal now, but it was new then. If you think about it, it's such an obvious idea, you'd be insane not to do it.

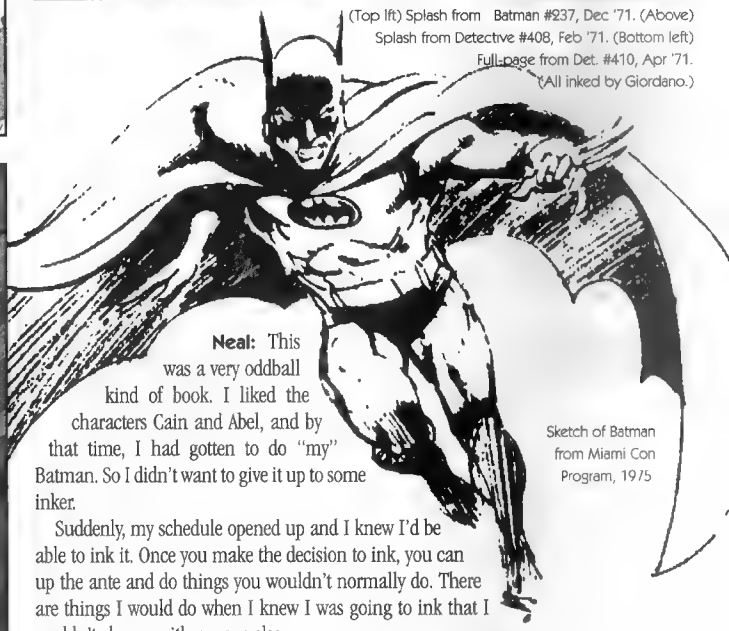
But Julie says, "You're kidding." I said, "Julie, how is DC going to feel if Marvel comes up with a man-bat and gets away with it? Because they can!" So Julie says, "Will you draw it?" Robbins ended up writing it, and that is the origin of Man-Bat.

Arlen: *One of your best collaborations with O'Neil was "Red Water Crimson Death", the "team-up" with The House of Mystery in* Brave and Bold *#93, January 1971, partly because it was one of the few Batman stories you inked yourself.*



CLANGG BATARANG WON'T GO DOWN ENOUGH TO SAVE US
BUT MY ARM HAS DISLOCATED
BOOT-SHOD FEET TOUCH SOLID GROUND AND MOMENTS LATER...
THAT MANY CHARACTER MAY HAVE ESCAPED ME THIS TIME... BUT I SAY DOOM NEVER MISS AGAIN!
THERE'S MORE TO THAT MAN AL HAN MEETS THE EYE

(Top lft) Splash from Batman #237, Dec '71. (Above) Splash from Detective #408, Feb '71. (Bottom left) Full-page from Det. #410, Apr '71. (All inked by Giordano.)



Sketch of Batman from Miami Con Program, 1975

Neal: This was a very oddball kind of book. I liked the characters Cain and Abel, and by that time, I had gotten to do "my" Batman. So I didn't want to give it up to some inker.

Suddenly, my schedule opened up and I knew I'd be able to ink it. Once you make the decision to ink, you can up the ante and do things you wouldn't normally do. There are things I would do when I knew I was going to ink that I couldn't chance with anyone else.

Arlen: *Did you choose who would ink you when you didn't ink yourself? Who did you like, who did you not like?*

Neal: I liked my inks when I took the time to do it right. I didn't really like other people inking my stuff. Hardly anybody had all the quality that I wanted. Somebody like Dick Giordano inked many things well, but he was always a little rushed. Tom Palmer did a complete job on my Marvel work, but tended to add lines on things like faces, so characters looked older than they were supposed to be. When you add lines, you tend to look at the lines. Yet both Dick and Tom had their own magic to add.

Arlen: *"The House that Haunted Batman"* (Detective Comics *#408, February 1971) was one of Len Wein's and Marv Wolfman's first published stories. This is about the time you're beginning to bring new talent into DC, like Berni Wrightson, Mike Kaluta, and Howard Chaykin.*

"DC was going to ca

Neal: I wasn't so much bringing them in as hiding them out. Just as quickly as DC opened the door to let me in, they attempted to close it after me. There was very little acceptance of anybody new.

So guys would come in and hang out in the room I was working in, otherwise they'd have to sit in the lobby. They didn't hide behind my desk, as legend has it. I was working on an artograph projector, and had to turn the room light off, so you had to look hard to make sure who was there, because the room was so dark. It was very casual; it wasn't like we were trying to "commando raid" DC Comics, but being in that room was a big deal. It was a place to be so you could take the next step and see an editor.

Wein and Wolfman, were initially, the most successful at getting in, I believe, via the letter pages. Then, when you get a story drawn by a professional who has achieved a little attention, suddenly you become professional too. Wrightson was the easiest because it was pretty recognizable that he was good enough. Chaykin was harder. Kaluta drifted, I don't know exactly how he got in.

I had become, by that time, like an advisor to the editors. They'd listen to me, but I'd have to jolly them along. Like, I got Rich Buckler in, but had to promise I'd ink his first job. It worked differently with each person. It was all for DC's own good, but they never quite recognized it that way. From their point of view, they didn't need anybody. From any logical person's point of view, they certainly did. Because otherwise everybody new was going to Marvel.

Arlen: *You drew in an office up at DC Comics everyday?*

Neal: I drew at home too, but mostly there, because they always wanted me to do covers. On a typical day, I'd artograph a cover, do layouts for more covers, and then I'd go home. When I got home I would work, maybe finish up a commercial job that night, then get up in the morning, drop off

Portrait of Denny O'Neil by Adams for Nov '71 A.C.B.A. awards house ad. (Right page) Original cover illustration for Green Lantern/Green Arrow #76, Apr '70.

ncel Green Lantern."

the job, head over to DC Comics around noon and do it all over again. I worked pretty hard. Every opportunity that I had, I took.

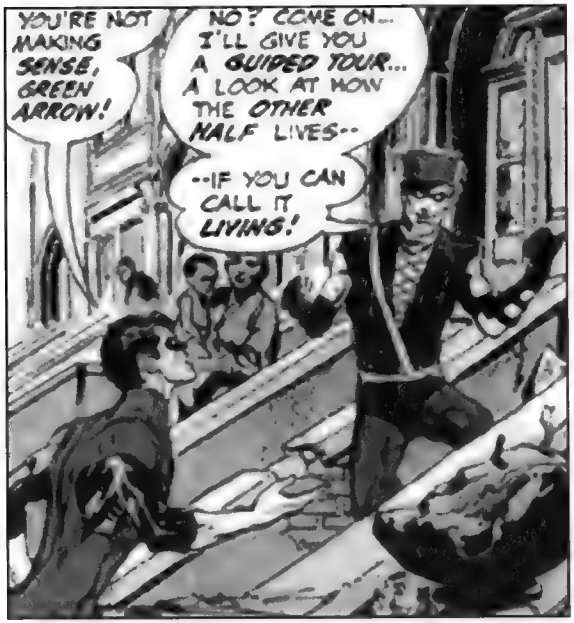
Arlen: *Like Green Lantern/Green Arrow?*

DC was going to cancel *Green Lantern.*

Gil Kane was off the book, so I asked Julie Schwartz if I could do the last couple of issues. All I wanted to do was draw Gil Kane's character and live up to his image of it. Julie told me I had too much to do, but I knew I could do it. And I wanted to do it. I had done so much with Batman that everybody's eyes were bugging out. So what was I going to do with Green Lantern?

Then Julie did a really smart thing. He got Denny O'Neil to write it. Denny came up with the theme that we really could play with and the ideas went crazy from there. Julie could depend on Denny coming up with good stories and me with good art, and everybody would talk about it. It became a very important series of comics.

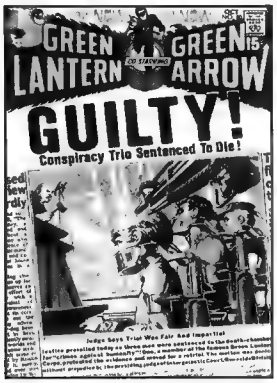
Arlen: *Green Arrow's first appearance a year before in* Brave & Bold *barely hinted at the political consciousness he would develop in* GL/GA. *How did he make this transition into superhero spokesman of the Sixties generation?*

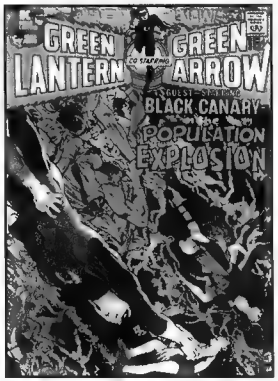

YOU'RE NOT MAKING SENSE, GREEN ARROW!
NO? COME ON... I'LL GIVE YOU A GUIDED TOUR... A LOOK AT HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES--
--IF YOU CAN CALL IT LIVING!

Re: close-up panel of African American from GL/GA #76: "A lot of people think this was drawn from a photograph. I would crave for a photograph like that."

Neal: Robin Hood was the perfect anti-hero rebel fight-for-the-underdog hero model for the time. By making GA into a cool Robin Hood, I had served him up as an anti-establishment foil to counter Green Lantern's conforming, status quo-worshipping, white do-gooder, blind, kind of 1950's creep attitude. Social consciousness was the name of the particular game, then, and GA became the focus of that surge.

When I asked Bob Haney to write GA with cool arrows, he did, a little. When Denny wrote him, I also





I KNOW IT MIGHT MEAN YOUR JOBS, BUT THIS PLANT—THIS WHOLE PROJECT IS CAPABLE OF KILLING PEOPLE! OLD PEOPLE WHO NEED CLEAN AIR TO LIVE; ASTHMATICS AND PEOPLE WITH LUNG DISEASES!
CHILDREN AND ADULTS WHO ARE MAYBE IN HOSPITALS HANGING BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH... WHERE THE BALANCE MAY BE TIPPED BY THE VERY AIR THEY BREATHE...THE AIR THAT YOU WOULD POLLUTE!

asked for cool arrows. He tried to use unique arrows when the opportunity arose, but it was a losing battle. GA had become the modern-day Robin Hood, and his political position was more important.

Small sacrifice that we lost the cool arrows.

Arlen: *Denny O'Neil was able to write the stories he wrote knowing that you were going to draw them. In other words, he was able to write more realistic comic book stories than had been written, because you could draw more realistically than any other comic book artist.*

Neal: One of the things Denny always said, which I take to heart, was that I was easy to write for. Because the things that take a lot of energy to explain to other artists, I already knew, so that same energy could be put into the story. As a team, I took enough of the visual responsibility off his head to allow him to focus on his writing.

The stuff that was in these comic books was inside Denny. He was a product of the sixties when all those issues arose, and he felt very strongly about

Re: cover of GL/GA #81, Dec '70: "I thought we started to run out of ideas when we ran the overpopulation story That was almost my last issue. Politically, I had a problem with the book. The American attitudes towards overpopulation were the reverse of sanity. Liberals felt the world was becoming overpopulated, so it was our responsibility to do something about it. Many of the liberal, intellectual, & socially-conscious young males got vasectomies, claiming they didn't want to bring more people into the world. Now, overpopulation is the world's #1 problem, and the solution isn't easy. It has little to do with rich Americans having babies and everything to do with people in India and Africa having 15 kids and not being able to feed them. Well-to-do Americans getting vasectomies isn't solving the problem. So the story's theme hit the wrong note with me. It was a liberal cause I could've done without."

them. He had some of that anger. I was available to take that and turn it into something that people hadn't seen before. I was like a director who had found a writer who had found his theme. Although Julie only consulted with me on general theme concepts, it wasn't until the end of the series that I made any real story contribution, and that was the drug issues.

DC Comics wanted to do a drug comic, so Denny and I spent some time at Phoenix House and places like that. I was also the chairman of my neighborhood drug rehabilitation center, making sure junkies weren't robbing people in the area. I got to see an awful lot of that close up. Denny and I separately presented concepts of comic books that DC might publish and give away for free. But the things we wanted to say about drug addiction were not the things DC wanted to say, like agreeing on the reasons for drug addiction. So DC decided not to do the project.

Still, Denny and I wanted to do something on drugs. But when I mentioned it, nobody at DC seemed interested because, of course, the Comics Code said we couldn't do it. I knew I wasn't going to get anywhere by trying to talk them into it, so I went home and drew what eventually became the cover of the first drug issue (*Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #85, September 1971).

Arlen: *Based on the built-in cliché of the name, "Speedy"?*

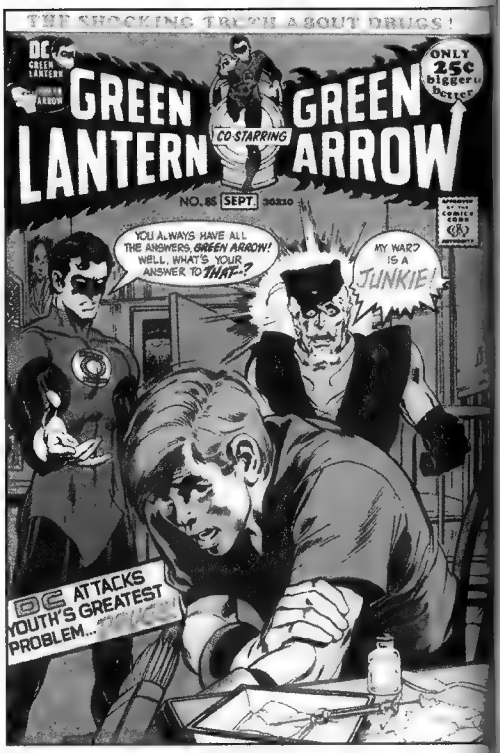
Neal: No, yet you'd think it would be. It seems so obvious, but it never occurred to me. I guess because he wasn't "speeding"… he was clearly on heroin.

So I put the cover on Julie Schwartz' desk and, of course, he picked it up and dropped it like a hot potato. "Why did you draw that?", he said. "You know we can't do it!" I said, "Well, Julie, if you want to do it, we can do it." It was such an impossible cover that it wasn't even considered.

DC was owned by Kinney at the time, so I took it to one of their executives, a guy named Frank Herrara. He was very liberal and forward-thinking, but he picked it up and dropped it like a hot potato too. So the cover hung around for a couple of days.

Finally Stan Lee, over at Marvel Comics, decided he was going to print a Spider-Man story that was rejected by the Comics Code because a teenage boy had "popped pills and walked off a roof". In all my experience at the Phoenix Houses and various places I spoke of, nobody ever "popped pills and walked off a roof". Stan had been reading too much fiction.

Arlen: *About incidents like Art Linkletter's daughter jumping out the window on LSD?*


THE SHOCKING TRUTH ABOUT DRUGS!
DC
GREEN LANTERN
GREEN ARROW
ONLY 25¢ bigger & Better
GREEN LANTERN
CO-STARRING
GREEN ARROW
NO. 85 SEPT. 30320
YOU ALWAYS HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS, GREEN ARROW! WELL, WHAT'S YOUR ANSWER TO THAT--?
MY WARD IS A JUNKIE!
DC ATTACKS YOUTH'S GREATEST PROBLEM...

GOOD BOY...
DON'T GIVE ME THAT "GOOD BOY" BULL! I ONLY MADE IT WITH SOME HELP FROM MY FRIENDS, HAL AND DINAH, WHEN YOU TURNED YOUR BACK ON ME!
ROY, THAT'S NOT FAIR...
NO, I GUESS IT ISN'T! YOU DID A LOT TO INSPIRE ME TO GO COLD TURKEY! SHOULD SHOW MY APPRECIATION...
THANKS!
WHAT...WAS THAT FOR?
CALL IT SHARING... I'M SHARING A VERY SMALL PIECE OF THE PAIN I'VE JUST GONE THROUGH THESE PAST FEW DAYS!
THE KIND OF PAIN THOUSANDS OF KIDS ARE GOING THROUGH EVERY DAY BECAUSE AN UNCARING AND UNTHINKING SOCIETY TURNS ITS BACK ON THEM!

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE HONORABLE JOHN V. LINDSAY, MAYOR OF NEW YORK CITY
ONLY 25¢ BIGGER & BETTER!
GREEN LANTERN
CO-STARRING
GREEN ARROW
MORE DEADLY THAN THE ATOM BOMB!
WINNER of ACADEMY AWARD for BEST COMIC!

Neal: Exactly. Lee used the right phrases, but I'm sure he didn't know what "pills" they were "popping".

So DC hears about Stan's book going to press, and they're dying, beaten to the punch. And right on Julie Schwartz' desk is a really true drug cover, and they blew it. They called for a meeting of the Comics Code counsel, and within two weeks, the whole Code was re-written. It took a modern-day Robin Hood–and his ward's addiction–to fire the bolt that would destroy the Code as it was written.

The social relevance of the drug books, though significant, pales in significance compared to the fact that Green Arrow bought freedom back to comic books, for all of us.

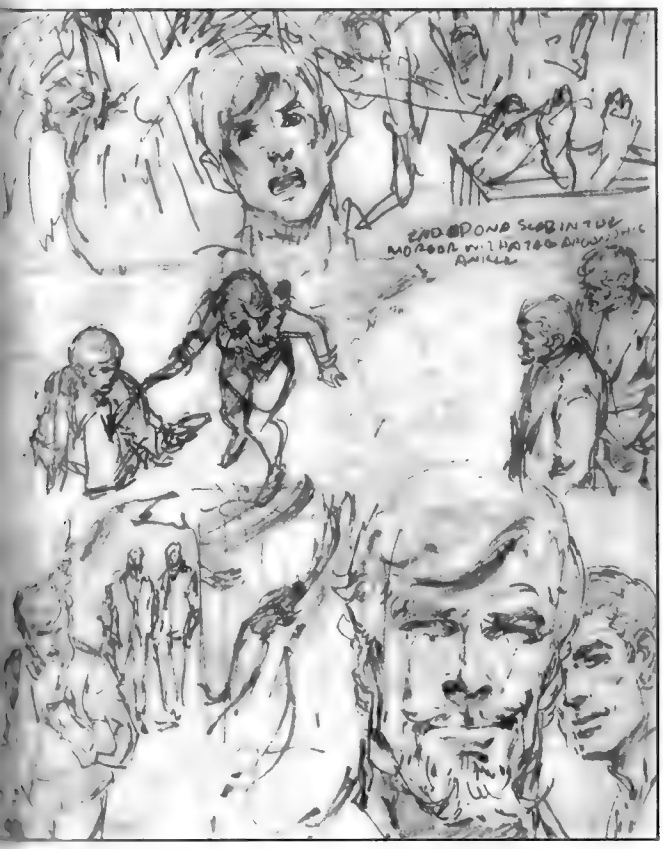
Arlen: *The end of the two-part drug story had always been considered controversial because of a perceived conflict between you and O'Neil over how the story should've concluded.*

Neal: Really? Well, as you know, at the beginning of the story, Green Arrow sees Speedy shooting up, smacks him to the floor and yells at him to get out. Not what I call a caring person. Then we go through this whole 2-part story, Speedy dries out in massive pain, and at the end, there's a reconciliation. The script, as originally written, has Speedy basically telling GA he beat the habit by himself. GA says, "Good boy," and they walk off together.

I read this and thought, no… what had changed? Somebody had to learn something. GA had to learn some kind of lesson. He had to learn to respect this person that he had beat up at the beginning of the story. I felt the strongest possible climax was necessary, considering how we started the story. I made my feelings perfectly clear to Denny, that I thought his ending was anti-climactic, but he let me know, basically, it was fine as is.

Well, I thought it was important enough to bring it up to the editor, so I wrote two extra pages where Speedy punches GA back, lets him in on his pain, and then splits. GA, the father figure, knows

Re: Thumbnail sketches of pages 24 and 25 of GL/GA #86, Nov '71, printed actual size: "How many times have you heard artists complain that they did a sketch and then the finish, but lost the quality of the sketch? Problem solved. The whole idea of doing thumbnail sketches like this is to draw until the moment you feel it's there. It has to feel right. Then, if you blow them up and trace them off, you keep the quality of your sketch. Yet I see too many artists do sketches like diagrams and then try and enlarge them into drawings. I don't understand how they can do it. If it's not down there in the thumbnail, it a n't going to be up there on the penciled page."



DRUGS ARE A SYMPTOM—AND WHILE WE THE REST OF SOCIETY, ATTACK THE SYMPTOM—NOT THE DISEASE! BUT THIS SYMPTOM IS WORSE THAN MOST—
"I WATCH "PUSHERS" "PUSHING" YOU, IT DRIVES YOU TO THE EDGE OF INSANITY—AND OVER—AND ONE DAY ENDS YOUR "TRIP" ON A SLAB IN THE MORGUE, WITH A "TAG" AROUND YOUR TOE!
GOTTA GO, MOM...
ROY...
THANKS FOR THE HAND, SISTER—BUT ARROW NEEDS YOUR HELP MORE THAN I DO—ONLY HE DOESN'T KNOW IT
HE'S KINDA DUMB IN A LOTTA WAYS...
I'M LIKE HIM A LOT! I'M COCKY ENOUGH TO THINK I CAN HELP SOME OF MY FRIENDS AVOID THE SCENE!
SEE YOU, "STAR-GATE" AROUND!
IT'S A HEAVY LABEL...KIND OF ARROW WHO "PUSHES" OR "USES" OTHER QUIVERS—WHEN HIS BOY BECOMES A JUNKIE!
NEXT ISSUE: GREEN LANTERN & GREEN ARROW STAR IN SOLO STORIES!

I DON'T BELIEVE YOU MISSER..
OKAY... I DON'T. LISTEN, WHITEY, THAT WINDBAG WANTS TO BE PRESIDENT! HE'S A RACIST..
...AND HE FIGURES ON CLIMBING TO THE WHITE HOUSE ON THE BACKS OF MY PEOPLE!

the kid's right and realizes that he (GA) was an ass. This ending made all the sense in the world to me. I brought the pages to Julie and said, "I honestly think this is how the story ought to end." He read them and said to go ahead and do it.

Arlen: *Without telling O'Neil?*

Neal: Of course he told Denny. But he's the editor; the editor makes the decision, that's how it works. For everyone!

Arlen: *After the drug issues, you go on to co-create the first American black superhero, the John Stewart Green Lantern.*

Neal: One day, Julie said to me, "We're talking about doing a new Green Lantern." I said, "Who's it going to be?" Julie said, "Why do you care?"

"Is he going to be white?" He knew I was laying a trap.

"Probably white...why?"

"Well, Julie, what do you think of a black or oriental instead?"

"We could try that at some time, but not this time."

"Julie, let me explain it from this point of view. An alien comes to earth with this lantern, and gives it to the most worthy person on earth, a white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant American airplane pilot. Then, the aliens had to have a back-up Green Lantern, so they find the second-most worthy man on earth, a white, blonde, American gym teacher. Well, that's kind of a stretch, considering the population of the planet. Now they're going to find another white guy for the third time? There aren't any Orientals or blacks in the world that are Lantern-worthy? We ought to have a black Green Lantern, not because we're liberals, but because it just makes sense." Julie grumbled, but he agreed.

But then the script came in, and I found the guy's name was Hannibal Lincoln, or Lincoln Washington, or something

like that. I thought how "comic book" of us. Why don't we give him a regular name? How about John Stewart? He's an architect who's out of work. That was a change I never heard Denny object to.

Arlen: *Why was* Green Lantern/Green Arrow *canceled?*

Neal: They canceled the book because it wasn't selling, and I can tell you why it wasn't selling.

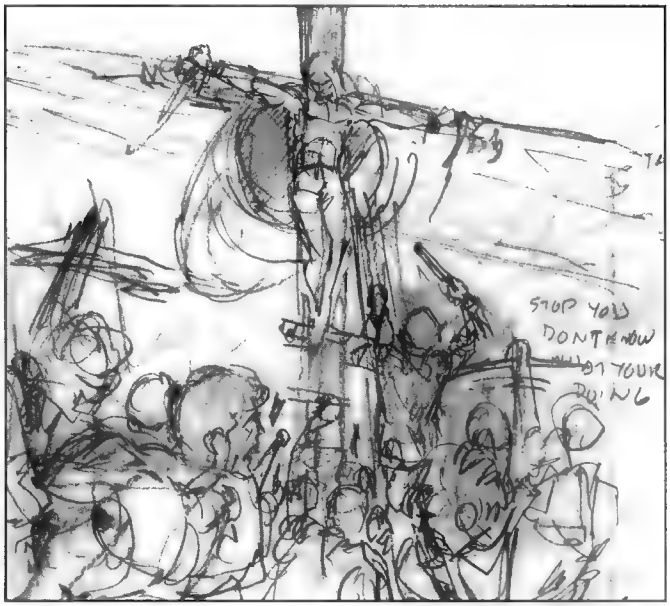
Before the age of the comic book store, dealers became aware that they could go to their local distributor and buy quantities of particular comic books. As a comic book might become more popular, like *Deadman* or *Green Lantern/Green Arrow,* they could go and buy as many as they wanted, and the local distributor would report them as being "destroyed". Suddenly *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* is not only not selling, but sales are even dropping a little!

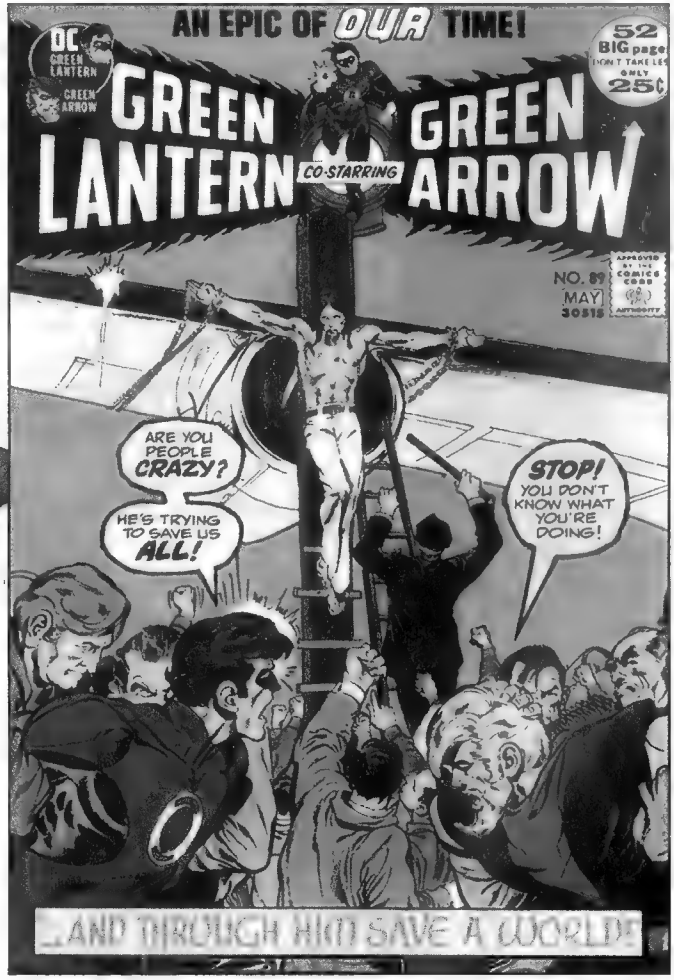
So, anything you would think was making a splash, wasn't making a splash. *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* got all kinds of attention, articles in *Newsweek,* articles everywhere. Everybody in the industry knew about it. Yet it didn't sell.

Arlen: *Throughout '73, your output at DC dwindled, and by '74 you had essentially stopped working for DC altogether. What led to this?*

Neal: For somebody who works as hard as I do, it's not like my production dropped off. I was also doing work for Marvel at the time, Man-Thing stories, Dracula, stuff like that. The "Son of God" series for *National Lampoon* took up a tremendous amount of my time. And I was doing commercial work. I had a studio. I wasn't coming into DC anymore. There was no reason to be there, and it was not a good place to be.

DC was getting very corporate, and made it clear that the rats nest I had up there was not necessarily something that was required. But that didn't matter, because by the time I moved out and got my own studio, all the new artists were in and getting their shot. They didn't need me so much any more. I was very pleased.





Panel and cover art from GL/GA #87, Jan '72. (Facing page) Panel and cover to GL/GA #89, May '72, the final issue.

"The changes I made at DC and Marvel Comics were not sufficient to satisfy me."

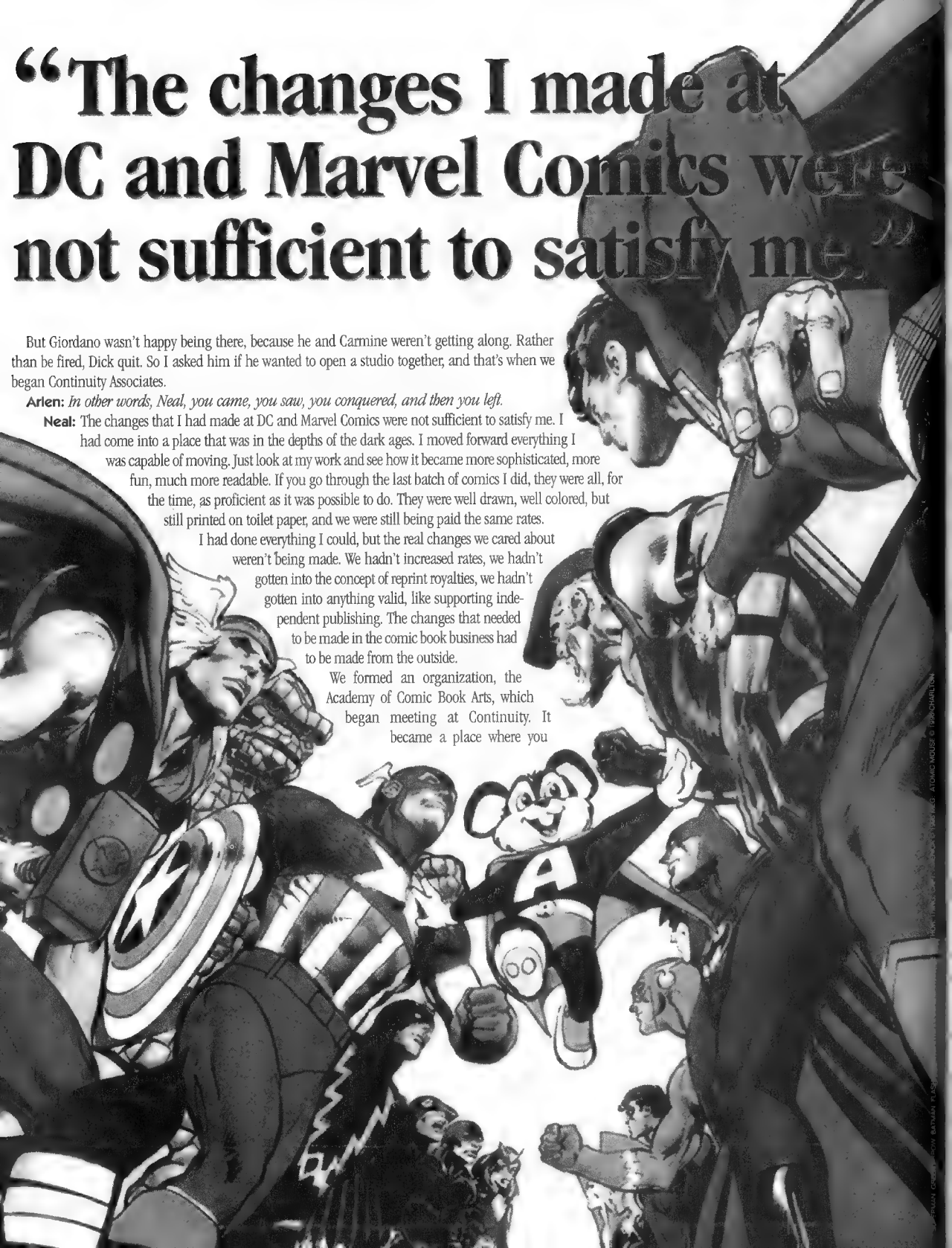
But Giordano wasn't happy being there, because he and Carmine weren't getting along. Rather than be fired, Dick quit. So I asked him if he wanted to open a studio together, and that's when we began Continuity Associates.

Arlen: *In other words, Neal, you came, you saw, you conquered, and then you left.*

Neal: The changes that I had made at DC and Marvel Comics were not sufficient to satisfy me. I had come into a place that was in the depths of the dark ages. I moved forward everything I was capable of moving. Just look at my work and see how it became more sophisticated, more fun, much more readable. If you go through the last batch of comics I did, they were all, for the time, as proficient as it was possible to do. They were well drawn, well colored, but still printed on toilet paper, and we were still being paid the same rates.

I had done everything I could, but the real changes we cared about weren't being made. We hadn't increased rates, we hadn't gotten into the concept of reprint royalties, we hadn't gotten into anything valid, like supporting independent publishing. The changes that needed to be made in the comic book business had to be made from the outside.

We formed an organization, the Academy of Comic Book Arts, which began meeting at Continuity. It became a place where you



(Facing page) Cover of The Art of Neal Adams, Vol #1, published by Sal Quartuccio, 1975 (colored by Richard Corben).
(Above, left) Panel by Kirby/Sinnott from Fantastic Four #71, Feb '68.
(Above, right) Panel from Batman #244, Sep '72.
(Bottom) From the '72 Detroit Tripie-Fan-Fair convent on program book.

could go and meet, rather than up in Marvel's office. We began to change the industry, and had quite an effect. We started the idea of returning the original artwork. We supported independent publishers when they came along. We got a lot done without being aggressive or nasty.

And the comic book world did become much better. Better artists came in. We print on better paper, we get better money, there's royalties, there's reprints. Covers got better, there's more design, more concepts. We have people in art schools studying all kinds of techniques and applying them to comic books. The potential for freedom in comics, the potential for creating great artwork, may be greater than it's ever been.

So it was obviously the right decision to leave. I had to leave DC Comics for a period of time, start the Academy and get involved in other processes. The time had come for a change.

Arlen: *Though your drawing styles are on opposite ends of the spectrum, many feel your impact on the medium has been as great as Kirby's.*

Neal: You have to think of Kirby's impact in a general sense. Kirby's a phenomenon as well as an inspiration. But nobody says they want to draw as well as Kirby. His work is like this kind of wall. It will never get better, it will never get worse, it's just there. It fulfills itself.

My work is more like a promise. My work says, "Here's this road. Here are some of the things you can see along the road, and there's no end to it." My impact, I think, is on a very personal, individual level. If you do good work and you succeed, the things that people take away from it are as individual as they are. The depth of the work was sufficient to reach different sparks in each person.

In a sense, my work said you now have permission to aspire to do great art in comic books. That if you think you're only worthy of producing fine art or becoming great in another field, I now present comic books as potential....

The challenge is, this is what I've done; what can you do?

what Steve Ditko had intended. Again, I didn't mean to do anything that would offend, upset or hurt him, and I wouldn't to this day. But that was the way I could make the character make sense for me."

O'Neil's thoughts on the infamous Bomba don't run quite as deep. The writer came onboard for the final two issues of the run—#6 (July/August 1968) and #7 (March/April 1969). Working with artist Jack Sparling, O'Neil did a credible job on a series that isn't half as bad as people remember.

"What an unlikely gig for me to get stuck with," O'Neil says laughing, "but it was a job. The series mercifully ended and we went on to other things. It was a non-objectionable assignment—I actually remember kind of enjoying at least one of them—I don't remember which one."

Bat Lash was an unusual gunfighter who originally appeared in *Showcase* #76 (August 1968) and then moved to his own, short-lived book (#1, October/November 1968 through #7, October/November 1969). Created out of a group session between Giordano, Nick Cardy, Joe Orlando, and Carmine Infantino, Bat Lash was a thinking man's western—eons ahead of its time.

Originally written by Sergio Aragones, O'Neil came to the book early in its run and added his touch to one of the best titles of the late 1960s. *Bat Lash* was a great book for O'Neil with his background in philosophy and literature. The character and stories were interwoven and complex, and what a letters page! *Bat Lash*'s mail page read more like a university forum than a comic book LOC, as the book's loyal readers and editor Joe Orlando discussed topics like Rosseau, Jeffersonian thought and Faulkner.

In a recent interview in the June 1997 issue of *Comic Book Marketplace*, *Bat Lash* artist Nick Cardy discussed his collaboration with O'Neil. "I enjoyed working with Denny. He's a very good writer and really understands the medium. Denny was the only writer that asked about the characters or any approach I had in mind. I would add my ideas and he would polish it with his words. It made you feel more involved and, I think, produce a better story."

"I came in at the very end of the creative process," O'Neil says. "The first bunch of stories were written by Sergio and I would get Nick's art which was beautiful—I think it was his high point—and add the copy at the last minute." O'Neil did, however, plot a couple of the book's later stories.

"*Bat Lash* was a wonderful book to work on and I think it was 20 years ahead of its time. He was the most flawed guy in comics—anti-hero is not too strong a word. Bat Lash felt bad when he was about to screw somebody over, but he did it anyway."

Bat Lash might have been boldly creative, but it was also a western in an age of declining reader interest outside the superhero genre. O'Neil recalls the book's demise:

"People are afraid to try what they're not familiar with. It's still a problem to this day. I remember getting the most literate fan mail I'd ever seen on that book, and a lot of it. We never saw sales figures and we were never privy to the reasons decisions were made. I would have to assume that it wasn't selling very well, but I'll never know. Somebody ought to take that original run and put it between covers and make it a book."

Hip young woman of the '60s

By the spring of 1968 O'Neil felt secure enough to retire "Sergius." DC picked up on the young writer's confidence, assigning him two major books that summer: *Wonder Woman* and *The Justice League of America*.

With the explosive 179th issue of Wonder Woman (November/December 1968), O'Neil, artist Mike Sekowsky and editor Jack Miller liberated her from decades of mediocrity. With breakneck speed, a stunning series of events stripped Diana Prince of her powers, exiled her from Paradise Island and cast her out into "Man's World." With the help of her new mentor—an elderly Asian gentlemen named I Ching—Diana became a karate chopping, international troubleshooter who operated out of her own Manhattan boutique.

"I was attacked by Gloria Steinem for the changes, and right now, see her point. I didn't at the time," O'Neil recalls. "I thought I was serving the cause of feminism by making her not dependent on a male god. I also thought I would update the character and make her a hip young woman of the '60s. Steinem's point was that you take the one super-powered female character in comics and take away her powers. I now see what she means."

O'Neil soon left *Wonder Woman* in the hands of Mike Sekowsky, only to return as writer/editor for a half dozen books in 1972 (#199, March/April 1972 through #204, November/December 1972). *Wonder Woman* was O'Neil's first editorial assignment and he more than rose to the occasion.

Now hanging out with hip "name writers" like Harlan Ellison—the new editor used his connections well. Jeff Jones drew a pair of covers while Samuel R. Delaney wrote a two-part story that placed Diana squarely into women's liberation:

"I had become friends with Delaney, and he was very, very interested in comics, and, lord knows he's a good writer—now head of the Department of Comparative Literature at Amherst. So it was a natural enough thing to try. I was editing this book, he was already a renowned science-fiction writer who'd won every award he could win, so it was logical enough to let him do a couple of issues."

JLA Shake up

The changes wrought in O'Neil's initial *Wonder Woman* run spilled over into his *Justice League of America* work (#66, November 1968 through #83, September 1970). In his first year on the book Wonder Woman quit, Black Canary joined, Snapper Carr turned traitor, the group got a new headquarters, and J'onn J'onzz' absence was resolved. These changes were minor in comparison to the historic revision of Green Arrow in issue #75 (November 1969).

Some readers felt that Former JLA writer Gardner Fox' stories had become formalistic, making the title less relevant by late 1960's standards. Further, many wanted more characterization… while Fox put more emphasis on story and plot. " I don't think I was ever aware that I wanted to shake things up for the sake of shaking them up," O'Neil says. "Certain things about the series weren't working for me, didn't make sense to me."

Under Julie Schwartz' editorship, O'Neil's JLA work was beginning to show flashes of his future brilliance. Part satire, part social commentary, O'Neil seemed to have fun, while adding depth to staid characters like Green Arrow and the Martian Manhunter.

Did handling so many diverse heroes pose a problem for O'Neil?

"It was very difficult—especially since there were some arbitrary rules. A certain percentage of them had to be on stage in every issue, and you were supposed to at least try to give them all equal time in the spotlight. It was impossible to do, but you were aware that was what you were supposed to do," O'Neil remembers. "The main problem though is, Jesus, you've got three versions of God—Flash, Green Lantern, and Superman at one end of the spectrum, and then you've got the Atom, who can make himself real little, and Batman whose real smart, at the other end. So how do you come up with an antagonist that answers the needs of all of those diverse characters."

By early 1970, O'Neil had expanded the stakes and given a preview of his work to come, with a two-part story that pitted the JLA against aliens bent on destruction of the earth's environment (*JLA* #78, February 1970 and #79, March 1970). The story concluded with O'Neil's somber reminder that though the JLA may have saved the earth this time, even they could not protect the planet from mankind's polluting ways.

Ironically, the greatest legacy of O'Neil's work on an ensemble of characters that included Superman and Batman, was his remaking of the motivation and personality of Green Arrow. Neal Adams' visual reconstruction of Green Arrow into a bearded, late-sixties Robin Hood occurred earlier in a Bob Haney authored Batman team-up in *Brave & Bold* (#85 September 1969). Two months later, with *JLA* #75, it was O'Neil who stripped Oliver Queen of his wealth and thrust him out into the 'real world.' Suddenly, this terminal minor character was replaced by a passionate man of the 1960s who spoke out in the tenor of his times.

Green Lantern/Green Arrow

These were heady days for O'Neil—his plots had become cleaner, his characters more intense. Then, as the '60s collapsed into the '70s, the writer was given an assignment that would elevate his work from clever to inspired. *Green Lantern* #76 (April 1970), which introduced the Green Lantern/Green Arrow team, hit like a nine-pound hammer—reviving an industry and forging the hottest creative team comics had seen since Stan Lee and Jack Kirby.

By 1970 the times had passed Green Lantern by, and his book was slated for cancellation. At Neal Adams' prompting, Julie Schwartz decided to give the artist and O'Neil a shot at saving the title. "The book had no place to go but up," O'Neil remembers. "So I came in one day, and Julie said 'Do you have any ideas for this character? Is there anything you want to do with Green Lantern?'"

Suddenly, it was like O'Neil was back at Charlton, writing back-up stories no one would ever read. Only this time the stakes were a major DC title—not some backwater western. O'Neil paired two diverse characters, and set them on a path to discover America and themselves.

The Green Lantern/Green Arrow series (*Green Lantern* #76, April 1970

WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM?
CAN'T YOU SEE? HE'S WITHDRAWING... COLD TURKEY!!
MY GUT... ON FIRE...
COLD... TURKEY?
LANTERN, YOU CAN BE DUMB! THE BOY'S A SNOWBIRD...HE'S ON DOPE! APPARENTLY BROWDEN IS A SALESMAN...A BLASTED PUSHER!
AND THAT'S AS LOW AS ANYBODY CAN SINK!

through #89, April/May 1972) contained stories which were innovative and contemporary yet respectful of the comic book idiom—realistic and full of action yet almost allegorical in their handling of complex, modern issues.

Perhaps the most influential single comic book story of the last thirty years, *GL* #76's "No Evil Shall Escape My Sight" presented Hal Jordan with evidence challenging his own simplistic idea of right and wrong, and his entire career as Green Lantern. The rest of the series would deepen Hal's struggle, egged on by the lusty emotions of Green Arrow.

While searching out Green Arrow in a Star City slum, Green Lantern encounters a young man roughing up a well-dressed citizen while a neighborhood crowd cheers him on. With typical superhero clichés, Green Lantern power rings the young man to police headquarters. Expecting accolades, Green Lantern turns and is instead pelted by a hail of garbage. As Green Lantern prepares to fight back, Green Arrow appears shouting down his old friend with ridicule.

It was as if O'Neil's Justice League revision had prepared Green Arrow for his roll as Green Lantern's fiery cultural counterpoint. Under O'Neil and Adams, Green Arrow's character became fully realized as a charismatic, street-smart anti-hero who was not afraid to challenge the system in the interest of justice.

Green Arrow takes Green Lantern on a tour of a nearby tenement, and explains to him that the "good citizen" he just helped is a slumlord who plans to tear down the building to make way for a parking lot. As GL and GA argue on the buildings' roof, an elderly black man emerges, setting up the most powerful three panels in comics.

The man's words directly confront Green Lantern's beliefs—literally bringing him to his knees:

"I been readin' about you...How you work for the blue skins...and how on a planet someplace you helped out the orange skins...and you done considerable for the purple skins! Only there's skins' you never bothered with..!...the Black skins! I want to know...how come?! Answer me that Mr. Green Lantern!"

Head hung down, the Emerald Crusader responds, "I can't."

The words read like blues inspired poetry. "It was pretty much all instinctive. I knew that we had to set up the rest of the series, though we had only a vague idea of what it was going to be at the time, and we needed to bring about this humbling of Green Lantern." O'Neil recollects, "A lot of the credit goes to Neal because, I think I said in the shot direction something like 'This has to be a great face,' and he certainly did give me a great face."

At the end of the adventure, the slumlord is arrested and all is seemingly put right. However, Green Lantern's actions throughout the story have placed him in conflict with those ultimate authority figures, the Guardians of the Universe. As GL apologizes to a Guardian in the story's epilogue, Green Arrow cuts him off and challenges the Guardians to experience life as a human being. The Guardians respond by sending one of their own to earth as human to join the Emerald Duo on a quest for America.

Though best remembered today for its introduction of "relevance" to comics, perhaps the title's greatest success was its characters. With O'Neil's superb characterization, and Adams' cinematic, true-to-life artwork, Hal Jordan and Oliver Queen become real people. O'Neil's use of small details like Ollie's love of chili, and Hal's endless string of lonely hotel rooms gave the characters depth and added to the drama.

"I think this is true of both Neal and me. After about that length of time you have your tool kit together. I mean, we knew at that point how to do comics. We were confident in the craft parts of what we did."

O'Neil applied not only his comic book experience, but his journalism background as well. Green Lantern/Green Arrow, "...was a chance to maybe take a shot at combining my two professional identities, as journalist, and as comic book writer," O'Neil says.

Steve Skeates, the writer, recently commented, "O'Neil attacked it from a different angle than a lot of us did. Because he had been a reporter beforehand, I think that worked into it. He was more content oriented rather than form oriented." Skeates continues, "That's why I think his socially conscious Green Lantern/Green Arrow stuff really worked. Because he wasn't playing around with the form. He was just playing around with the content. I think readers responded to that a lot more, because that's more up front—that's not artsy—fooling around like me and (Jim) Steranko were doing."

Critical acclaim

The series generated a massive amount of publicity for DC. *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* was written up in *Newsweek* and the *Village Voice* and appreciated on college campuses. Within the comic book industry, traditionally conservative National miraculously leapfrogged Marvel and became the place to be.

"It was pretty heady for Neal and myself. We found ourselves being interviewed and invited to colleges, and being taken seriously. Very odd experience for comic book guys," O'Neil remembers. "Comics were utterly disreputable, which was one of the things I liked when I first got into them. Quality was not in anybody's lexicon. You were judged by how deft and fast you were. While there was some recognition that some stories were better than others, that was not an overwhelming consideration. And I liked that. I didn't want to be in any kind of competitive arena. So all of a sudden, despite ourselves, we were being taken seriously."

Throughout the series, O'Neil and Adams tackled numerous social issues. "Denny had a list of areas that he would like to handle," Neal Adams elaborates, "and being at that time, a younger, politically aware person, and a person of the '50s and '60s, Denny, being also a liberal, had certain attitudes toward things. Towards company towns, towards over population, towards all these things that we read in the free press, and we read in all those magazines that the adults never read." Adams recalls, "It was a real opportunity for Denny to go and kick out. And it was an opportunity for me. I didn't necessarily feel quite as angry about certain things that Denny did, but I was along for the ride."

Teenage drug addiction was an issue that both O'Neil and Adams felt strongly about. Until a Stan Lee three part Spider-Man series which used drugs as a subplot, the issue had not been addressed by the comic book industry. Indeed, Lee had to run his stories without the approval of the "dreaded" Comics Code Authority.

Where Lee introduced drug use as a backdrop, O'Neil and Adams felt confident enough to confront the issue directly. The two part series (*GL* #85, September 1971 and #86, November 1971) centered on Oliver Queen's ward Roy "Speedy" Harper's struggle with heroin addiction. The stories were presented realistically, without any sermonizing.

Though the drug issues received some media coverage—*GL* #86 contained a letter of endorsement from Mayor John Lindsay of New York City—

for us fans their significance was largely between the lines. We became aware of kinks in Green Arrow's armor. After all, hadn't Speedy turned to heroin largely because of Ollie's neglect? Not only does Oliver not acknowledge his own role in Speedy's addiction, but he also turns his anger on his ward, beating him up and reacting more like John Wayne than Peter Fonda.

Hal, on the other hand displays compassion toward Speedy but can barely control his anger toward the jet-setting leader of the drug cartel. As the series neared its end, Hal's character has clearly evolved.

O'Neil comments on the two characters today "Ollie was never a surrogate for me. I think right along I was more sympathetic to Hal than maybe people thought. I mean, my politics were basically Ollie's, but I always thought of him as a hot head—a guy who leapt a helluva lot more often than he looked, and was probably overly emotional."

Despite its critical acclaim, *Green Lantern* was canceled with #89. A series that touched on so many issues including the rights of Native Americans, a cult leader who preyed on the disenfranchised, and introduced a black man as a backup to Green Lantern was gone after a two year run.

Though there remains questions about why DC would cancel such an important title, Julius Schwartz says, "As far as I know, it was sales. Sales had dropped. The average reader was not interested in relevancy. Publicity is not worth two cents if you don't buy the magazine."

GL and GA received a short reprieve as a back up feature in *Flash* (#217, August/September 1972 through #219, December/January 1973). The three-part story was, in O'Neil's words, "not about a social issue, but about the consequences of accidentally taking a life. The last story was a pure character piece, and I guess it (the series) might have gone in that direction."

"We had just about exhausted the list of social causes that any of us were genuinely interested in, and yet, at that point, we had succeeded in maybe adding more character and depth to these heroes than was common in comics. So we had that going for us. The danger would have been 'Cause of the Month Comics' which would have become boring and banal after awhile."

"In some ways, maybe the series ended when it should have. We had a good run, we dealt with the issues that we were genuinely concerned with, and maybe it was time to get off the stage. That's not why we did it—we did it because the book was canceled. But looking back I don't much regret that it didn't go on longer than it did."

RA'S AL GHŪL AND HIS OX OF A SERVANT SHOWING RIGHT AFTER ROBIN DISAPPEARED... THAT WAS A JOKE!
TOO QUICK...TOO BIG A COINCIDENCE! AL GHŪL'S STORY OF HIS DAUGHTER'S IDENTICAL DISAPPEARANCE WOULDN'T HAVE FOOLED A MORON!
THEN IN CALCUTTA... UBU ALWAYS MADE A BIG ROUTINE OF LETTING HIS BOSS GO AHEAD OF ME...

Batman

While O'Neil's Green Lantern/Green Arrow stories garnered more attention at the time, his work on *Batman* has proven to be far more influential. The character was at a crossroads when O'Neil came aboard in late 1969—mired in a kind of post TV series funk exacerbated by stories that were still seen as borderline "camp" and the artwork was no longer in vogue. In remarkable contrast, Neal Adams' run in *Brave & Bold* (#79 August/September 1968 to #86 October/November 1969) advanced Batman by returning him to, in Adams' own words, "...a creature of the night who haunted the shadows."

Neal Adams recalls his transition from Murray Boltinoff's *Brave & Bold* to the Julie Schwartz edited "regular" Batman titles *Detective Comics* and *Batman*:

"It (*B&B*) was a ploy to do Batman and to change Batman as much as possible. So I did Batman and, of course, the letters came in and Julie Schwartz was upset with me for all the letters, but asked me to work on Batman. I don't think Julie actually asked me—I think he told me that I had to work on Batman. He said 'Well, who do you want to work with?' And I said, 'Well, I want to work with whoever is doing good scripts for you. Who's your best guy?' And he said 'I got this Denny O'Neil guy', and I said 'I'd be delighted to work with Denny.' He said 'I happen to have a script here.' So I started to work with Denny."

O'Neil and Adams' first Batman story, "Secret of the Waiting Graves" (*Detective Comics* #395, January 1970) catapulted Batman out of his late '60s slump and into the night. A dark, macabre tale of revenge and immortality set in central Mexico, "Waiting Graves" was a revelation. In O'Neil, Adams' had found a writer who equaled his vision. The subject matter and drama of the story fit seamlessly with the shadowy atmosphere implicit in Adams' art and Dick Giordano's moody inks.

In true O'Neil fashion, his scripts delved deeper into Bruce Wayne's character and the demons that drove him to become Batman. "Once I read a piece by Alfred Bester talking about how much fun it is to write obsessed characters, and that sort of focused it for me. I think at that point I began to understand what that guy was about." O'Neil continues, "I mean, nobody had ever quite explained it in those terms before. Nobody tried to give him very much psychology at all beyond the inspiration that Finger and Kane had of the origin. But, you stop to think 'of course he'd be obsessed,' and then with that as a starting place, a lot of the rest of it falls into line."

O'Neil again succeeded in turning a comic book hero into a real person. His Batman was a complex, driven character blessed with impeccable detective skills and physical perfection, who seemed endlessly resourceful in the face of incredible dangers.

In contrast to the journalistic approach of the Green Lantern/Green Arrow series, O'Neil employed a wider range of storytelling techniques in his Batman work. Elements of the macabre and pulp-like influences, as well as the Batman's own detective stories of the 1940s were evidently part of O'Neil's "tool kit" during his three year run on the character.

By applying his range of skills, O'Neil presented the reader with a variety of characters and plot devices. In an O'Neil script, Batman could turn up

anywhere in the world, faced with any number of different conflicts. In "Red Water, Crimson Death" (*B&B* #93, December 1970/January 1971), Batman saved a small Irish fishing village with some help from the ghost of King Hugh, while "Night of the Reaper" (*Batman* #237, December 1971) dealt with the internal anguish of a Nazi concentration camp survivor.

Rā's Al Ghūl & Company

During the early 1970s, O'Neil revived four classic Batman villains and created one of his own—the now classic Rā's Al Ghūl. Perhaps by coincidence, the two Adams-illustrated revivals, the Joker and Two-Face, are definitive… while O'Neil's revivals of Catwoman and the Penguin are also noteworthy, but to a lesser extent.

"They were great characters—particularly the Joker. The first story was a lot of fun to do. And again, I did it with a certain sense of unease because it was a helluva lot more violent and bloody than comics generally were at that time. But, it got into print virtually unchanged."

Indeed in "The Jokers Five-Way Revenge" (*Batman* #253, November 1973), O'Neil returned the Joker to the psychotic murderer of the early 1940s with the same gusto he had applied to Batman's own revival. The brilliant splash page captures the significance of the event: O'Neil's lyrical prose summons the Joker from a black past as nature itself bemoans his evil presence, while Adams' cackling, wicked-eyed, madman—a malevolent grin fixed upon his face—hurtles through the rain. Like many facets of O'Neil and Adams Batman work, their version of the Joker lives on today in comics and film. The story was the last of the O'Neil/Adams Batman collaborations and served as a fitting end piece to the twelve epic stories they'd created.

"Neal and I discovered when we went to Chicago to interview Muhammed Ali that we disagree about almost everything, but on some pre- or unconscious level we had a profound agreement about what comic books are, and how to do superheroes," O'Neil says.

O'Neil's own creation, Rā's Al Ghūl, a Lazarus-like villain able to revive himself from the dead, is clearly as powerful and as evil as any foe Batman has ever faced. The story which introduced Rā's, "Daughter of the Demon" (*Batman* #232, June 1971) is a pulp-styled masterpiece. Robin has been abducted, and the mysterious villain leads Batman to the dangerous back streets of Calcutta, India, and finally to the forbidding reaches of the Himalayas in a globetrotting pursuit of the kidnappers.

Rā's' early appearances in *Batman* (beginning with #232, June 1971 and ending with #245, October 1972) were especially fascinating for a number of reasons. Pulp-like touches such as Rā's' knowledge of Batman's identity as Bruce Wayne, the world wide scope of his criminal organization, and his alluring yet dangerous daughter Talia gave the series scope and excitement.

Were the pulps a direct influence for O'Neil? "I didn't read pulp magazines until after they stopped being published," he says. "Now that in turn had a strong influence on radio drama and I was as devoted to that as I was to comics."

"We experimented back then. One of the things that I preach as gospel when I teach is you must live in absolute dread of never for a second boring your audience. That was something the pulp writers obviously believed."

In "Who Knows What Evil—?" (*Batman* #253, November 1973) O'Neil actually plucked the legendary Shadow from the pulps and presented him as Batman's biggest inspiration. Though the story was revisionist and mildly exploitative, O'Neil had motivations beyond the successful launching of the Shadow's new DC comic book.

"As much as anything it was a wink and a nudge to the insiders," O'Neil explains. "It was one of those double-meaning things. If you knew nothing about the context of that and you have Batman saying to him 'you're my hero you're my idol', you could accept it at face value. I knew Bill Finger a little bit, and he had told me that the so-called Maxwell Grant stories were a major influence on his own writing. So it was a little nod to pulp fiction history."

WHILE, ON THE FLOOR ABOVE...
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LIGHT? WAIT! SOMEONE APPROACHES--ANOTHER MEDDLER?
THEN THE DIM LIGHT FROM THE STREET BELOW REVEALS A SILHOUETTED FIGURE...
DOES MR. RASPUTIN HAVE VISITORS? COME, SHOW YOURSELF, MY FRIEND!
BY THE FLAMES OF THE FALTINE! DR. STRANGE!

Superman & The Shadow

O'Neil wrote and edited DC's short-lived *Shadow* (#1, October/November 1973 through #12, August/September 1975). Though the decision to keep the Shadow in his original 1930's setting probably turned off a contemporary audience, O'Neil's well-plotted detective stories and Michael Kaluta's synergistic art more than succeeded on a creative level. "Mike did an absolutely fabulous job," O'Neil recalls.

The series took some elements from the Shadow's 1940s radio program, but O'Neil's character was closer to the mystery of Walter Gibson's original pulp stories. O'Neil portrayed the Shadow less as a person and more as a "force," seemingly invoked by the presence of evil deeds. Though not a big seller, *The Shadow* stands as the finest comic book adaptation of a pulp hero.

When Mort Weisinger retired in late 1970, Julie Schwartz inherited *Superman* and *World's Finest*. Eager to make fundamental changes to the character, Schwartz turned to Denny O'Neil.

Schwartz recollects, "When I was going to take over *Superman*, I wanted my best writer on it. At that point, Denny O'Neil was my best writer. I asked Denny to do *Superman* and he turned me down. I asked him why, and he said he doesn't like to write superheroes. I told him to just do it for a year. I'll work out the whole plot with you and there wouldn't be any difficulty."

O'Neil remembers his reluctance to write the character from Krypton. "My problems with Superman were more that he was just too powerful. It was hard to get a conflict going. You'd have to contrive some reason why he didn't solve the problem immediately. And, he was a little too goody-two-shoes. He was a little too 'white bread' somehow."

Hesitant or not, O'Neil's brief run on *Superman* (#233, January 1971 through #242, September 1971) succeeded in reviving and expanding the character. Schwartz and O'Neil's bold innovations on the title included Clark Kent's switch from newspaper to television reporter, the destruction of kryptonite, and the introduction of the well-remembered Sand Creature.

Nicely supported by Curt Swan and Murphy Anderson's crisp artwork, O'Neil's Superman work remains seriously underrated. Together, his

Superman stories work as one piece. Each new issue built upon previous ones, as O'Neil laid down the epic tale of the legendary hero's conflict with issues of his own power.

By making the character more interesting for himself, O'Neil did the same for the reader. O'Neil saw the reduction of Superman's powers as a way to "both come up with an interesting story, and also to make him manageable."

O'Neil continues:

"'Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound,' that should be enough for anybody I thought. And we didn't take him down quite that far. We left X-ray vision and we left flight. But, at one point Superman extinguished the sun by blowing on it like a birthday candle. A guy who can do that is God. And how do you put somebody in conflict with God twelve times a year? Mort Weisinger, in the '50s, solved the problem partially by doing a lot of double identity stories and a lot of stories that were intentionally silly. That didn't seem like a good way for us to go in the '60s."

O'Neil further explored the Man of Steel's personality in the pages of *World's Finest.* His most memorable story for this Superman team-up title included a fantasy sequence in which the hero is spanked by a giant version of his father Jor-El (*WF* #201, March 1971). The Jor-El confrontation served to illustrate Superman's secret fear of not living up to his parent's expectations.

One of O'Neil's more improbable assignments was his work on *Shazam!*, DC's early 1970's revival of the original Captain Marvel. Drawn by Cap's original artist C.C. Beck, and edited by Schwartz, the book made no attempt to update the character. Against the back-drop of Vietnam and Watergate, the series was nostalgic at best.

"*Shazam!*'s revamp of old characters failed unequivocally," O'Neil recalls today. "I tried to do what I loved when I was six years old. Beck and Otto Binder did terrific comics, but we needed to be more contemporary."

Nightmaster & the Question

Sword of Sorcery (#1, March 1973 through #5, December 1973), was another O'Neil attempt to break out of the superhero mold. The title was a comic book adaptation of Fritz Leiber's novels starring Fafhrd the Barbarian and the Gray Mouser. Drawn by Howard Chaykin and written by O'Neil, the stories were true to Leiber's more intellectual, somewhat offbeat approach to the Sword and Sorcery genre. "I always preferred Fritz Leiber's stories to Robert E. Howard's Conan stories," O'Neil says. "I just don't respond very much to the 'big brute with a sword slashing the black skinned monster' kind of fiction. There's nothing wrong with it. It's just not my particular fantasy. But I did like Leiber's Fafhrd and Gray Mouser stories."

Nightmaster (*Showcase* #82, May 1969 through #84, August 1969), was O'Neil's own earlier attempt at the Sword and Sorcery genre. The O'Neil creation was a rock musician who was transported to a mystic dimension and became a sword-wielding adventurer. Nightmaster pre-dated Marvel's *Conan the Barbarian* by over a year. The final two issues of the series are notable as Berni Wrightson's comic book debut.

As the '70s wore on, O'Neil continued to write for DC. Then, late in the decade, he left the company to accept a writer/editor position at Marvel. O'Neil's most important work while at Marvel was an *Iron Man* run that chronicled Tony Stark's battle with alcoholism.

O'Neil returned to DC in the mid-1980s as editor of the Batman line. Now in charge of the character he helped recreate, his editorship has included Frank Miller's memorable *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns,* and the ambitious multi-issue, *Batman: Knightfall.* The later work resulted in O'Neil's fine novelization—*Batman: Knightfall*, published in 1994 by Bantam Books.

Since returning to DC, O'Neil also continues to write. While *Azrael,* a Knightfall spin-off, remains his sole monthly title, he also scripted a late 1980s revival of Charlton's The Question.

"If you liked the old Question, I changed it a lot. I kind of regret having done that, despite the fact that I loved writing my version for three years," O'Neil says today. "In some ways, I think that's the high point of my comics scripting in that it was the most personal and the most fun. Fewer restrictions."

Recently, O'Neil has been working on a prequel to his Green Lantern/Green Arrow series. The story involves the first meeting between Hal Jordan and Oliver Queen, and is slated to run in the *Legends of the DC Universe* series in early 1998. Vietnam is the issue this time, as Hal and Ollie begin their quest for the heart of America where it began for most Americans—the war in Southeast Asia.

Uncommonly human

O'Neil's DC work of the late '60s and early '70s stands among the most influential in comics. His realistic characterizations and dialogue, clean narratives and intelligent plots took comic book storytelling to the next level. O'Neil's incorporation of outside influences, including philosophy and literature, and the fearlessness with which he challenged his readers, kicked open the doors for new generations of comic book writers and artists.

Elliot S. Maggin, who later inherited O'Neil's Superman assignment, recalls the writer's impact:

"Denny is the guy who made me notice when I was 18 or 19 that somebody wrote comic books. Somebody was taking care and putting his best efforts into this medium. It was possible to take time and take care and not mix metaphors and tell a good story, and still do it in the comics medium."

Fans also plugged into O'Neil's innovations. Noted comic book personality Mark Evanier remembers discovering O'Neil's work:

"At a time when a lot of superhero comics seemed to be stuck in the mode of terminal déjvu, Denny brought fresh approaches to a lot of old favorites. He was obviously someone who'd read more than comic books in his life. There were little touches in his work—uncommonly human, real dialogue. When you saw his name in the credits, you knew you were in for something different."

Jim Aparo, whose association with O'Neil dates back to Charlton and continues today at DC, remarks, "In all the years I've worked with Denny, he was great. He writes a good clean script, and leaves a lot up to the artist. He gives you the basics and you go with it. He's a very professional person."

Neal Adams recently told us, "To me the good side was that we worked very well together and turned out some of the best comic books that have ever appeared on the printed page. And I'm very happy with the relationship. I couldn't have asked for better. If Denny's out there reading this, believe me, I could not have asked for better."

O'Neil himself reflects on his craft with an anecdote set during his mid-1980's return to DC:

"I had been here about six months on staff and Dick (Giordano) said 'Its about time for you to write something,' and I said okay. That was interesting because I found that I really wanted to write. Always before it had been a question of supporting myself, but here I had a salary, and I didn't really need to write to eat. I found that answered a question—'What is my relation to this?' Well, my relation is something that goes a lot deeper than the need to make a living at it."

And the relationship continues.

THE SHADOW COMICS

Continued from page 11

comic had faded into near extinction, being replaced by westerns, romance, crime or horror comics. With the demise of the superhero, there also came a steady decline in comic book creativity, as well as sales. The only artistically challenging publisher of the fifties, EC Comics, saw its empire crumble immediately after the senate hearings on the relationship between comic books and juvenile delinquency and the subsequent imposition of the Comic Code Authority.

Comic books were in danger of becoming a faint memory of the past.

But things began to change just around the turn of the decade. By 1964, when Archie released its first issue of *The Shadow*, the Silver Age of comics was already in full swing. Marvel Comics had burst onto the scene and found tremendous success with The Fantastic Four, Spider-Man and the Hulk. Stan Lee, the publisher of Marvel, added to his success by embarking on a tour of the college campuses, espousing the virtues of the new generation of heroes and adding legions of new fans to Marvel's ranks. Over at DC Comics, a rebirth was occurring of the glorious heroes of the forties with Batman and Superman finding new life amongst the addition of Julius Schwartz' newly revamped Flash and Green Lantern. Comic book fever had again taken the nation by storm and readers were flocking to the drugstore by the millions to find the latest issues of their heroes.

At the same time, another powerful entertainment trend was running rampant across the nation. Secret Agents. Spies. Gimmicks and gadgets. This trend, launched by the tremendous success of the James Bond series of films, capitalized on the growing fear of the Red Menace and the frigid Cold War. James Bond premiered in 1961 with *Dr. No*, and immediately followed in 1963 with *From Russia With Love* and 1964 with *Goldfinger. The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, the ground breaking television show, made its television debut that same year.

Everybody, it seemed wanted to be either a secret agent or a superhero. When Belmont decided to publish the new Shadow novels, they gave the audience what they wanted. Rather than reprint old pulp stories, Belmont released eight new Shadow novels written by Dennis Lynds as the new Maxwell Grant. These novels focused on a different version of the Shadow. Someone whom the publishers felt was more in tune with the times. More hip. A Shadow more similar to *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* than anything Walter Gibson ever created.

It was only natural that Archie Comics should follow suit. The *Shadow* #1, which hit the stands August 1964, revealed the new Lamont Cranston as the Shadow, America's top secret agent in the US Secret Service, complete with blond hair and secret gadgets. This first adventure found the Shadow foiling the evil Shiwan Khan's plot to steal the plans for a new, experimental cold war weapon.

Gone were the famous brimmed hat and scarf, gone were the agents and blazing twin .45s. In order to masquerade his identity, Cranston did nothing more than take off his glasses and put on his cape. In essence, Archie stripped the Shadow of everything except his name and the ever-present, Margo Lane, his secretary, and Shrevvy, who now chauffeured them around in a Rolls Royce.

All pretenses of this new Shadow being even slightly related to the Shadow of the pulp days were thrown out the window with the second issue of Archie's *Shadow*. The cover blurb blared out the message, "Watch for an H-bomb series of shockers in the absorbing book length novel... The Triangle of Terror." This issue found the Shadow hurtling across the cover to save a helpless Margo Lane from the clutches of Shiwan Khan, but this wasn't the Shadow of yesterday, this was Shadow the Superhero, complete with skintight superhero costume, mask, boots and cape!

The following issues focused on this super-Shadow, who seemed to develop new powers with each episode of his implausible adventures trying to protect America's interests against the evil Shiwan Khan. In one tale, the Shadow suddenly appeared with a belt buckle power beam and later a multi-action Shadow gun that was capable of shooting weakness gas and electric blasts. Another found the Shadow with boot springs for jumping. Each story told the familiar tale of the Shadow defeating a communist menace to America, usually by using his hypnotic powers to brainwash the villain into following his will.

Jerry Siegel, the original scripter and co-creator of Superman, took over the writing chores with issue #3 and launched the Shadow into an absurd, over the top world of superheroes and super villains with tales like, "The Menace of the Radiation Rogue" and "The Incredible Alliance of Shiwan Khan and Attila the Hunter."

A typical Siegel Shadow epic, "The Shadow battles the Brute," found the Shadow matched against one of Shiwan Khan's most menacing underlings, one of his goons who was zapped with a growth ray until he became a hulking behemoth. The Shadow tried to subdue him by hypnotizing him but was unable to penetrate the Brute's protective goggles. Finally, the Shadow shattered the goggles with a "supersonic note from his "special whistle"" only to find that underneath the goggles, the Brute was wearing special hypnotism-proof, unbreakable contact lenses! Truly a bad day for the Shadow's hypnotic powers. Eventually the Brute, realizing that he'd been double crossed by Shiwan Khan when he failed to get his portion of the stolen loot, turned against Khan and perished while saving Margo Lane from a falling stone gargoyle. And if the plot wasn't enough, Siegel told the whole story in his over-the-top, slam-bam, surprise a second, ultra-hero style.

Siegel brought to the Shadow the previously mentioned superbelt and Shadow gun, as well as some truly awful dialogue. One time, as the Shadow battled the monstrous Brute, we were treated to the villain saying, "Of course I have a terrible temper, smash things, rob and steal and am as treacherous as an eel! Outside of that, I am quite likable! And handsome too...."

The artwork, first handled by John Rosenberger in the clean style he brought to the Fly and the Jaguar, and later by Golden Age veteran Paul Reinman, was neither dark enough to adequately capture the espionage mood nor dramatic enough to compete with Marvel in the superhero category. All of this made for some rather uninspired story-telling and it was no surprise that the comic was canceled in September of 1965 after only its eighth issue. Doug Murray, the comic writer for *The Monster Times*, later ranked this version of the Shadow as one of the ten worst comics ever published.

While it seems that it would be easy to dismiss Archie's version as a brief aberration in the comic book continuum of the Shadow, in reality, this would be doing the series a grave injustice. It's true that the series was despised by Shadow fans, but this should not take away from its significant historical value. In 1965, at a Saturday night party in the Playboy mansion, Hugh Hefner screened the 1949 movie serial Batman and Robin for his friends and associates, hoping that they would find the film as unintentionally funny as he did. The screening was a huge success. The film was so bad that it was good, and so was born into the pop vernacular the concept of "camp."

Camp became the rage of the sixties, best epitomized by the 1966 *Batman and Robin* television

He is feared by all who transgress the law, by all who plan evil... He comes from nowhere and melts back into nothingness as silently as his namesake. He acts in the name of justice, striking swiftly, stunningly, finally... With spitting automatics and a laugh that chills the marrow, he leads a band of loyal agents against the nation's wrongdoers. Follow him now, as he battles the clock in a desperate race to solve... The Doom Puzzle! **—The Shadow #1, DC Comics**

series, with its crazy dialogue and Batman theme song (followed by the dance craze, the Batsui). Camp also took the comic business by storm. *Time* ran an article in 1965 titled, "Batfans and Supermaniacs." Marvel began to name their comics "PopArt." DC embraced camp head on, immersing its heroes in the "zeroes for heroes" crazy camp lingo. And Archie, the much maligned publisher of *The Shadow*, found new life as well with the souped-up, camped-up, wild and wacky versions of their old MLJ heroes the Shield, the Web, the Comet and the newer Fly.

There was no doubt about it, camp was hot, and the campiest comics of them all, the Archie heroes, were scripted by none other than Jerry Siegel. No other writer delved as deeply into the camp mode or created more absurd stories than Siegel. By 1966, when camp was at its peak, Belmont Books published a paperback reprint of some of its comics, titled *High Camp Super-heroes*. The introduction to this rather inauspicious work was written by the "king of camp" himself, Jerry Siegel, who noted that comics had become cool again because, "High Camp devotees had gone ape over long underwear-attired villain clobberers."

Seen in this context, *The Shadow* comic may actually have been quite visionary, as it's clear that Siegel used the book as a forum to begin experimenting with the boundaries of over-the-top story-telling. As such, Siegel's work on the Shadow helped to create the very backbone of camp, a full year before it became popular. In essence, the Shadow was camp before camp was camp.

It remains a mystery whether or not this was Siegel's intention. Whether he meant for the Shadow series to be so intentionally "bad that it was good" or whether the series was just bad. Probably, only the Shadow knows.

Return to the Pulps: The 1970s

Immediately, it was clear that this wasn't the Shadow of the sixties. When DC Comics beat out Marvel for the rights to publish a Shadow comic book in 1973, the definitive comic version of *The Shadow* finally hit the stands. As scripted by Denny O'Neil and immaculately drawn by Michael Kaluta, DC's *The Shadow* came the closest of any comic to realizing the gritty pulp origins of the Master of Darkness.

Actually the story of how this particular comic came into existence is a tale in and of itself. With the radio show again enjoying popularity in syndication, and the unexpected success of the Pyramid paperback reprints of the early pulp stories by Walter Gibson, Carmine Infantino, then the editorial director at DC Comics, decided that the Shadow was again ready for revival onto the four-color page. Fortunately, by that time, whatever painful memories there may have been of the failed Archie Comics version had faded, and the editorial department had a clean slate on which to recreate the Shadow mythos.

Initially, the project was handed to Len Wein, then the successful writer of DC's Swamp Thing, to do the scripting chores. There was really no doubt about who the artist would be. Jim Steranko, who had already proven himself as one of the ground-breaking illustrators of the sixties with his cinematic artwork on *Nick Fury, Agent of Shield* and *Strange Tales* for Marvel Comics, was then painting stunning covers for the Pyramid Shadow paperbacks. His selection as the artist to craft the adventures of the Shadow was a natural. Unfortunately, negotiations with him fell through when he demanded to use his own writer and the plans for the comic were stalled.

Rather than give up, however, Infantino re-thought his strategy and brought together a new creative team. This time he selected Denny O'Neil, fresh from his critically acclaimed stint on Green Lantern/Green Arrow to be the voice and Alex Toth, the gifted artist of the '40s and '50s, to be the vision of the Shadow. O'Neil was a good choice. As the current writer of the *Batman* series, he was adept at writing mysteries in the dark and somber tradition initially created by Walter Gibson. But again, troubles arose with the artist and Toth walked out. Finally, Bernie Wrightson, the moody artist of DC's Swamp Thing signed on for the project.

As the script was completed and work began on the comic, a teaser ad featuring Wrightson's art appeared in many of DC's titles, but before the first issue was completed, Wrightson, who found himself in a time crunch with his other work, was forced to pull out. Jim Aparo was O'Neil's next choice, but he also was unable to work the project into his schedule. So now DC was stuck. They had the rights to the character, a script, even advertisements announcing the comic book, but they had no comic.

In one of those rare moments of fortuitous timing, Michael Kaluta, then a virtual unknown having just completed work on his first major comic project, "The Carson of Venus" series in *Weird Worlds*, overheard O'Neil in the coffee room at the DC building complaining to Steve Skeates about

the problems they were having with the Shadow comic. Kaluta, who had virtually no interest in the character (he had read only one *Shadow* paperback and, by his own admission, didn't even like it), gathered up his courage, approached O'Neil and asked if he could do the project. Pressed for time, and with his back against the wall, O'Neil reluctantly agreed… and the rest, as they say, is history.

The critical success of DC's *Shadow*, and the esteem with which it is held by collectors today is a testament to the artistic vision of both men, each of whom were irreplaceable elements in a moment of magic. Credit for the theme and tone of the comic should go to Denny O'Neil who stood his ground in the editorial meetings and refused to modernize the Shadow for the '70s nor change his characterization, thereby remaining true to the vision created by Walter Gibson. According to O'Neil, he tried to, "stay very faithful in spirit to the original." He played the Shadow as an impersonal force, distant, almost a force of nature, blowing through the crime-ridden streets of the '30s, seeking out evil and destroying it.

It was actually this grimness of character that made O'Neil feel uncomfortable, as he had difficulty writing about a character that completely ignored due process of the law. In order to make the character work, O'Neil believed that the readers had to accept as a given that the Shadow was always right. As O'Neil stated, "He killed because he knew to an absolute certainty that his enemies deserved death."

O'Neil accomplished this by never letting the reader be privy to the Shadow's thoughts. Never once was the Shadow given a thought balloon explaining his motivations nor his background. He was bestowed with the almost demigod-like power of detecting evil and then dealing out punishment. The human elements of the stories came from the point of view of the agents, Margo, Harry and the rest of the crew, all of whom were resurrected for the comic. The Shadow himself remained an enigma. The judge and jury. He did not sentence a villain to the death penalty… he was the death penalty!

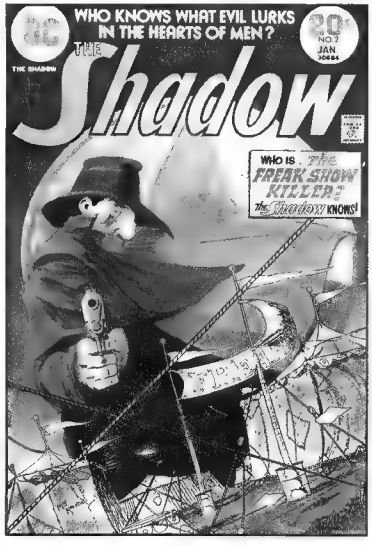
Perfectly complementing O'Neil's vision of the Shadow was the artwork carefully rendered by Kaluta. Still a neophyte in the industry having only recently completed his art training at the Richmond Professional Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University, Kaluta had only the Carson of Venus series and a few fill-in issues under his belt, as well as some work that appeared in various fanzines. He settled into a studio with Bernie Wrightson, Jeff Jones and Barry Windsor-Smith and soon began producing some of the most evocative comic art of the seventies.

Kaluta's Shadow world was drawn with tremendous attention to detail for period costuming and architecture which perfectly captured the mood and decay of depression era New York City. Kaluta, however, had little idea of how to visually conceptualize the Shadow, and ran to Steve Hickman for information. He then patterned his Shadow after the evocative pulp artwork of Ed Cartier, who, according to Kaluta, could capture the essence of the Shadow with a simple gesture of his cape or tip of his hat. Cartier's Shadow was fluidity in movement. Kaluta's Shadow evolved from this as a nebulous force with a hawk nose, fire opal ring and cloak of black, highlighted by a red scarf, who melted away into the shadows. Kaluta invested a tremendous amount of time and emotion into each perfectly composed panel and immediately he won the approval of critics and fans alike.

The very first issue of DC's *Shadow* (which appeared in November 1973) launched the reader back into the realm of mystery and suspense as the Shadow used all of his cunning and physical prowess to foil the attempted robbery of a convoy of used currency being delivered to Washington DC for recycling. Immediately, O'Neil re-created the mood and atmosphere of the original pulps, re-introducing Shrevvy, Margo, Harry Vincent and Burbank as agents in the Shadow's war on crime. Back were the blazing .45s, "roaring vengeance in either hand." Back was the girasol ring, the Shadow's hypnotic powers, coded messages, the Sanctum, the autogyro and that infamous icy laugh, driving fear into the hearts of the guilty.

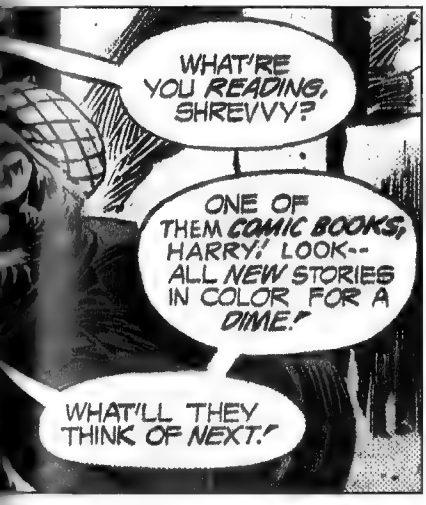
O'Neil's intentions for the series were most clearly exemplified by the subscription ad found on page 12 of that very first issue. New subscribers to the Shadow didn't find the comic listed in the superhero category with Batman and Superman, but rather it appeared under the mystery section along with such titles as *Ghosts, The Unexpected* and *Weird Mystery Tales*. Walter Gibson would've been proud.

Kaluta perfectly realized the mood of O'Neil's vision, from his gorgeous painted covers in the old pulp tradition, to the dynamically designed panels, decaying waterfront warehouses and the fluid movements of the Shadow in action. The Shadow had never been darker nor more menacing.



Critical reaction to the early issues of the bi-monthly series applauded the creative team's ability to bring the real Shadow back to life. O'Neil even went so far as to introduce Kent Allard, the real identity of the Shadow, into the comic, debunking the long held premise of the radio show that the Shadow was in reality Lamont Cranston. But as Will Murray, famed Shadow historian, has noted, O'Neil's Shadow was really an amalgamation of all the Shadows that had existed, from the pulps, the radio and Dennis Lynd's Belmont novels, as well as a few new twists of O'Neil's own invention. It is a credit to O'Neil's writing skills that he could bring together so many disparate versions of the Shadow and make the whole concept work.

Issue #11 (Jun/Jul 1975) pits the Shadow against the Avenger plus showcases a copy of Detective #1. Kaluta's cover on issue #2 looks like a pulp from the '30s.


WHAT'RE YOU READING, SHREVVY?
ONE OF THEM COMIC BOOKS, HARRY! LOOK-- ALL NEW STORIES IN COLOR FOR A DIME!
WHAT'LL THEY THINK OF NEXT!

Kaluta and O'Neil worked together on the first four issues, at which time, Kaluta became bogged down and couldn't make his deadline. Issue #5 was a fill-in done by Frank Robbins, and Kaluta returned with what may be his greatest work on the Shadow, "Night of the Ninja," which appeared in issue #6. This story returned the Shadow to his favorite pulp locale, Chinatown, in search of a deadly ninja assassin. Kaluta's attention to detail was breathtaking and it was clear that he enjoyed detailing the images of the Shadow prowling through the dark, mysterious streets, battling ninja warriors and bringing the guilty to justice.

Unfortunately, that issue would be the last issue Kaluta would do. Despite the bi-monthly production schedule, the amount of time Kaluta poured into each page made it simply impossible for him to keep with the deadlines, and the editors had no choice but to take him off the book. It is a great testament to the quality of his work that Kaluta is recognized today as the single artist most closely associated with the Shadow, when in actuality, that reputation was garnered illustrating less that half the issues of a comic book series that ran for only twelve issues, more than twenty years ago. Clearly, those five issues packed quite a punch.

With issue #7, Frank Robbins took over as full time artist, and immediately the fans cried foul. Robbins, who had garnered a hefty reputation for his work on the *Scorchy Smith* comic strip and *Johnny Hazard* strip (which he created), brought with him a straightforward, angular, almost blocky rendering style that contrasted sharply with Kaluta's nebulous, fluid technique. In retrospect, Robbins' art was probably better suited to the rather static comic strip medium than the dynamic pages of the comic book. The legions of cult followers of Kaluta's art wrote letters in angry protest to Robbins' work, unfortunately overshadowing some of the fine scripts that O'Neil continued to produce. After three issues, Robbins left and was replaced by Filipino artist E. R. Cruz with covers again done by Michael Kaluta.

Cruz' style was actually well suited to the book. His ethereal lines resembled Kaluta's, yet his staging lacked his predecessor's dramatic flair and his rendering lacked the emotional investment of Kaluta's. Be that as it may, the artwork was certainly adequate for the scripts supplied by O'Neil and occasionally by Michael Uslan including issue #11, which saw the Shadow team up with another old Street & Smith pulp character, the Avenger.

Unfortunately, however, with the loss of Kaluta the series had lost most of its fan support and was canceled after issue #12 in September 1975. O'Neil has said that he had no warning of the series' impending cancellation and in fact learned of the fact when a reader pointed out to him that the Shadow had been omitted from the company's subscription ad. O'Neil stated that he greatly lamented the loss of the title which he clearly enjoyed writing, but had no choice except to move on.

The world had not seen the last of the O'Neil/Kaluta Shadow however. In 1989, DC Comics reprinted issues #1-4 and #6 of the famous Kaluta run in a hardbound graphic novel, *The Private Files of The Shadow*. With a new cover by Kaluta, the package was a beautiful collection of some truly wonderful stories, re-presented for the first time in full-process color that greatly enhanced the art. The real prize, however, was the return of Kaluta to the Shadow with a new 15 page story that he both wrote and drew.

"In the Toils of Wing Fat," brought the Shadow back to Chinatown to free the kidnapped son of the Japanese ambassador. The entire story was told without dialogue, but captioned by the frantic voice of a radio news reporter describing the carnage at the scene of kidnapping, the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. In the end, the Shadow rescued the child, dealt out explosive death to the culprits and proved once again that "crime does not pay."

The Shadow comic book was not the only place where the Shadow appeared during the seventies. Making full use of their license and trying to arouse interest in their new Shadow venture, DC had the Shadow cross over into another of its titles, thereby creating one of the great team-ups of all time. *Batman* #253, which was released simultaneously with the first issue of *The Shadow* in November 1973, featured a beautiful Kaluta cover, artwork by Irv Novick and a story by regular Batman scribe, Denny O'Neil. Being the writer for both the Batman and the Shadow, O'Neil used the opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous debt Bob Kane and Bill Finger owed to Walter Gibson, as the Batman was clearly inspired by the exploits of the Shadow.

In this story, "Who Knows What Evil—?" Batman, on a hunt for a gang of counterfeiters, found himself aided mysteriously by an unknown, nebulous figure, an expert marksman, a pilot of an antique autogyro, and the bearer of an icy laugh that even chilled Batman from his "boots to his cowl." As the crime was finally wrapped up, Batman received a note arranging a meeting with his mysterious assistant, who proved to be none other than the Shadow, who had been shadowing Batman to see if he deserved the splendid reputation he had as a crime fighter. Batman immediately confessed to the Shadow, that while he had never told anyone his secret, it was indeed the Shadow who had been his biggest inspiration. The issue ended as the two dark creatures of the night shook hands, acknowledging their roles as mentor and student in the battle against evil.

The Shadow returned to the pages of *Batman* with issue #259, released in December of 1974 as a 100-page giant issue. In this lead-off story, O'Neil revealed how a young Bruce Wayne witnessed the Shadow foil a robbery attempt some time before the fateful night when his parents were gunned down, launching him down the path that would lead to him becoming the Batman. The Shadow and the Batman teamed up to foil that would be robber's attempt to steal the same jewels once again. Again, the Batman acknowledged his debt to the Shadow, who faded away into the darkness before Batman could ever thank him. Unfortunately, with the demise of *The Shadow*, the cross over appearances of the Shadow ceased as well. Once again, the dark avenger of the night was forced into retirement and he would not be seen again that decade.

The Shadow did return to comics in various incarnations in both the "revisionist eighties," and the "return to roots" nineties, but that will be another tale for another time. For now, we can look back at the long comic book history of the Shadow, and once again be entertained and amazed by his fearless exploits against crime.

NOLAN'S NOTEBOOK

Continued from page 9

will be Ye Editor and *CBM* readers.) I know *Buzzy* #70 exists, because a friend, Southern California indexer supreme Dan Stevenson, has had one for many years. And I assume my esteemed editor has one too. I have never seen one, and I'm pretty sure it is not pictured in any DC house ads, but I think I know what the cover looks like.

That's because for a brief time in 1956, DC used four-panel cover gags for its three long-running teen humor titles—on *A Date with Judy* #51 and #52, *Leave it to Binky* #53 and 54, and *Buzzy* #69, #70 (apparently) and #71. Archie had been doing this, too, but for some reason stopped doing so at the same time DC did while going back to the standard single gag covers.

I always used to wonder which issue would be the final DC I needed (now I'm wondering about the 1948-59 Archie titles, of which I am about 85 percent complete, and the 1948-53 Marvel Family titles, of which I am more than 80 percent complete).

The scarce House of Mystery #5 (Aug 1952) is perhaps the closest DC ever came to a real "horror" cover.

Now I know—*Buzzy* #70! Can anyone help an old DC collector with her obsession? Does anyone out there have a *Buzzy* #70?

I know only one thing: I've never passed up the #70. That's because if you're a DC collector, you know that it's much more difficult to obtain many of the 1950's issues than most of the 1940's copies.

Don't get me wrong—I'm not saying that 1940's issues are easy to come by. I'm sure some of them are very scarce. Even so, I can remember Lawrence Watt-Evans, the famed science fiction writer who collected horror comics for many years before selling his collection a few years back, uncovered something like 17 copies of *Flash Comics* #104 (including mine) for a comic census he did more than a decade ago.

Flash Comics #104 was (and still is) supposed to be pretty scarce, but it seems to be readily available even now, especially if you have a spare thousand bucks or so. I know I've probably seen at least 17 copies myself over the years.

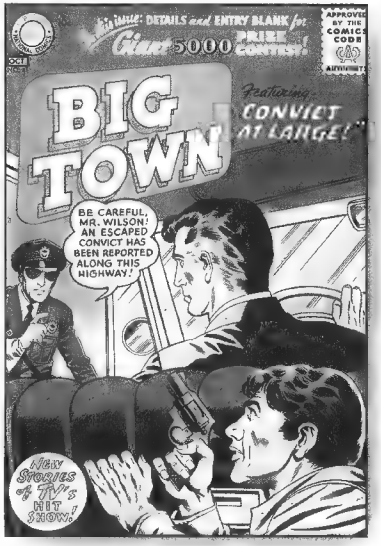
In contrast, I'll bet you won't find 17 copies of *Buzzy* #70! (One, that's all I want, just one....)

At the recent SuperCon conducted so well in Oakland by Steve Wyatt and Scott McAdam (two guys who really know how to put fun into a comics show), I had the pleasure of seeing *CBM* contributor Steve Sibra of Montana and his former Seattle buddy, Dave King. There's nothing like a gabfest involving three long-time middle-aged collectors, and I was enjoying it immensely until Dave told me he had decided to collect the entire 79-issue run of *A Date with Judy* (1947-60).

Dave, you don't know what you're letting yourself in for! You'll have fun, but you'll also suffer the tortures of the damned. The first 40 issues or so shouldn't be too tough to find, but, oh those 1955 and 1956 issues! It took me forever (well, more than 15 years) to find those issues of *A Date with Judy*.

Some collectors and dealers insist that the toughest DCs to find are the 1951-53 issues. My own feeling is that the 1955 and 1956 issues are, in general, the most difficult to locate. This is just a hunch based on having attended more than 100 major conventions and at least as many minor ones over the years, not to mention having enjoyed countless conversations with DC collectors all over the country.

There were still plenty of titles being published at that time by the major companies (these were the first two post-Wertham years and the first two years of the Comics Code Authority), but many of them apparently suffered significant circulation declines. In those days, however, publishers weren't required to list circulation figures in their statements of ownership.


DETAILS and ENTRY BLANK for Giant $000 PRIZE CONTEST!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE
BIG TOWN
Featuring CONVICT AT LARGE!
BE CAREFUL, MR. WILSON! AN ESCAPED CONVICT HAS BEEN REPORTED ALONG THIS HIGHWAY!
HOW STORIES A TRY'S HIT SHOW!

Big Town #41 (Oct 1956) is among the scarcest of all DC issues. The 50-issue run of Big Town (1951-58) is difficult to complete and only the first 11 issues are pictured in the Photo-Journal.

I've had a difficult time finding any number of 1956 romance comics from companies other than DC (and 1956 DC romance is no piece of cake, either). So my entirely unscientific feeling is that comics from those early post-Code years are pretty tough! Of course, you'll always be able to find a few, but try to put together an entire company's output!

So, you ask, what are the scarcest DCs from the 1950s? OK, I'll venture a few purely unscientific guesses (and without referring to the *Gerber Photo-Journal*). Of the superhero and costume hero titles, nothing seems especially scarce except, perhaps, the first dozen or so issues of *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen*. Actually, #1 is not scarce, but #2-6 seem to be pretty tough books. Some of the early issues of *Superman's Girl Friend, Lois Lane* can be tough to find also, especially in grade.

I didn't have any real trouble locating all of the issues of *Brave & Bold*, but I would say *Showcase* #2 (Kings of the Wild) is a tough book. I have a

feeling this sold worse than any other *Showcase*. Of course, Russ Heath's beautiful Frogmen issue for *Showcase* #3 can be tough, too, but only because so many copies are locked up in collections. *Showcase* #3 is one of the most underrated comics of all time!

Of the western titles, the last issue I found was *Western Comics* #56 (from 1956, natch). But I doubt if that's any tougher than many other issues from that period. I'd say *All-Star Western* is tougher in general than *Western Comics* and *Tomahawk*. The eight-issue runs of *Frontier Fighters* and *Legends of Daniel Boone* aren't really all that scarce (the Davy Crockett craze ensured that).

But *Hopalong Cassidy*? Now that's another story. A lot of those DC issues (#86-135) are, in my humble opinion, by far the toughest DC westerns. I was fortunate enough to run into a lot of them at once. The reason is simple: Unlike most other popular western comics of the 1954-59 period (when DC was publishing Hoppy after gaining the rights from Fawcett), the character was getting no new exposure either in theaters or on television. Bill Boyd, who played Hopalong Cassidy in the movies in the 1940s (remember the Robert Mitchum villains?) bought up the old films for television, so Hoppy was strictly on reruns in the 1950s following a brief run of original shows for TV in 1949-51.

The DC romance titles are a lot more common that most people think, simply because they haven't been as avidly collected as the other types. Even so, it's a major challenge to collect all 243 issues from the 1949-59 period. Mick Rabin, another *CBM* stalwart, a few years ago sent me the last one I needed (*Falling in Love* #28) from 1959. (Thanks, Mick!)

The science fiction and weird titles, some of DC's finest stuff, are expensive but generally available. In my book, some of the pre-Code issues of *House of Mystery* (#1-35) can be very tough. I'd say the toughest of all the DC material in this category is *House of Mystery* #2-5. Those are terrific books, by the way.

Of DC's three crime titles, *Mr. District Attorney* and *Gangbusters* weren't too tough to put together, but *Big Town* was very difficult. I'd bet *Big Town* sold a lot less than the other two, simply because of the title. The newspaper drama was a popular radio and television show and also a series of movies in the late 1940s, but it was always more adult-oriented than most radio or TV shows adapted for comics.

The toughest of the teen/girl humor titles are the short-lived *Miss Melody Lane* #1-3 and *Everything Happens to Harvey* #1-7, but there are plenty of scattered issues from other DC teen/girl humor titles that can be very tough (e.g. *Buzzy* #70).

Of the other humor stuff, the later *Mutt & Jeff* issues can be challenging, but by far the most difficult humor title to complete is *Sugar & Spike*, and not just because it's one of the most expensive DC runs. Those wonderfully charming comics were read and cut up by young kids, and it's almost impossible to find them even in fine condition, much less near mint. *Sugar & Spike* #1 just might be the toughest of all DC first issues, and the other 1950's issues (#2-25) all seem uncommon and in high demand.

Another fairly tough run to put together is *Rex the Wonder Dog* #1-46, especially #2-10 or so. These are some of the most underrated comics of all time! But then, I love animal stories.

The run of *It's Game Time* #1-4 can be had, but only at a fearsome price. These are for DC completists only, and the fact that I bought them speaks volumes for my obsession.

Some of the 13 once-yearly issues of *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* (1950-1962) also can be tough, especially the 1955-56 issue (#6, not pictured in *Gerber*).

I've probably ignored some of the DC issues you might think are especially scarce, so your reactions are welcome.

But I haven't ignored *Buzzy* #70… and I'll be eternally grateful to the person who finds one for me… and saves me from the horrible fate of staring at that hole in my run for the next 15 years!

PAGE 9: Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer #6 (1955-56 issue) is not pictured in the Gerber Photo-Journal and is probably the rarest of the 13-issue run… even harder to find than the 1962-63 80-page giant (which is also not pictured in Gerber).

Buzzy #71 (May/Jun 1956) is doubtless similar to Buzzy #70, the only issue Michelle Nolan needs to complete her 1948-59 DC collection. All these mid-1950's DC humor issues can be tough to find.

Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from the '40s through the '60s. In real life, Michelle works as a freelance journalist.

CBM Back Issues are still available...but act quickly!

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#41 Frazetta, Phantom, Horror, & Felix!
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#44 Wally Wood, Amaz. Fantasy #16
#45 JLA, Steve Skeates, Banned in Canada!
#46 Atomic Genre, Pre-Code Horror, etc.
#49 Batman & Robin, Bat-Collectibles, etc.
#50 Julie Schwartz, Big Bang Theory, etc.
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THE MATT SCHIFFMAN REPORT

If it's nice and fairly priced...

The latest update from Overstreet (The Guide) has hit everywhere and it is really making news all over fandom. Of course some are happy and some aren't, but there is nothing really new about that on the heels of an Overstreet release... and no one I spoke with was complaining that prices didn't move upward enough, which is the usual gripe. For the most part, the drop in price for mid grade Silver had been expected and reflected the market for the past year and a half. Some collectors that don't actively buy and sell, or follow CBM were certainly caught unaware, and had a few gripes... but how long was the comic market going to artificially excuse itself from normal market forces? We'll just have to wait and see what this does for sales over the next few months.

Pre Golden Age/Golden Age (1933-1945)

Pull out any article from '95 pertaining to the Silver market and just plug in the word "Gold." If it is nice and priced fairly, it sells. If it is lower grade and priced at market levels, it sells. Sure, many speculators left the market for greener pastures, but those that remained have been enjoying picking up books here and there and finding that copy that is "just right" for their collection. Dealers are willing to deal again, customer service is up, and nice books can be found with a little effort. An increasing market for Good to VG keys and mainstream titles is growing faster than any segment of the marketplace right now.

Sales: Batman #5 GD $340; Blue Bolt #1 GD $320; Catman #3 GD $110; Detective #83 GD $150; Exciting #9 GD $815; Fantastic #4 VG $390; Flash Comics #2 GD $680; Keen Komics V2 #3 GD $100; Marvel Mystery #11 GD $340; Master #21 GD $500; National #5 GD $160; Police Comics #1 GD+ $810; Thrilling #1 FN $700; Submariner #5 GD $225, #18 appNM $810.

Atom Age (1946-1956)

"Do those issues really exist?" and "Who has this kind of stuff?" are the two most frequently asked questions right now. Scarcity seems to be the driving factor in this market and instead of it falling onto a handful of books, it seems to cover entire titles and genres from this period. Fox romance? Any romance? Pre-Code horror? One shots? Fiction House sleepers (Fight, Wings or Rangers) in nice shape? Just where are these books? What's not hot? Everyone is asking for them and certainly offering enough to possibly scare a few out of the woodwork, but they don't seem to be surfacing. Since so many of these Guide for so little and are not pictured in Gerber, the feeding frenzy for these books is even more voracious.

Sales: Blue Bolt #49 VF+ $495; Boy Loves Girl #39 NM $48; Boys Ranch #1 FN $178; Caught #1 FN $95; Fugitives from Justice #2 FN $90; Journey Into Mystery #2 GD $135; Marines in Battle #1 FN+ $75; Namora #3 GD $190; Our Army at War #2 GD $110; Strange Adventures #1 GD $425; Strange Mystery #5 FN/VF $155; Tales of Justice #53 VF $110; Teen Age Brides #1 VF/NM $150; Western Killers #60 FN/VF $140.

Silver Age (1956-1969)

Will the discounted prices have any huge affect upon the market... or will it continue onward? There are dealers out there reporting that they have no trouble at all selling most Silver Age book. FF, Spider-Man, X-Men, Action, Detective and even high grade Daredevils. Most will discount and have done so over the past year. So were collectors buying the mid-grade books at a discount because they were again collectible, or did they perceive a bargain in relation to the Guide? We'll soon find out. Silver is one of the few arenas that is bringing in novice collectors, so we could be looking at *(Continued)*

CHRISTIE'S EAST

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NEW YORK, NY 10021
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The following are selected results from the Christie's East comic collectibles auction held December 18th, 1997:

Action #90,93,98,114 (Big Apple copies) VF+ $2,070, #88,97,103,108,146 (Big Apple copies) VF+ $2,530, #23 appVF+ $1,725, Adventure #97,100-102 (Big Apple copies) VF- $1,955, #104,105,107 (Big Apple copies) VF- $1,380, #25 (no grade) $690, #247 VF $2,760; Air Fighters #1 VF- $1,035; All American #69,72,73,76 (Big Apple copies) VF $690; All Star #29,31,32,34 (Big Apple copies) VF- $2,185; Amazing Man #5(#1) GD $978; Amazing Spider-Man #2-13 (Big Apple copies) VF $8,050; Atomic Comics #1-3 (Big Apple copies) VF+ $1,495; Avengers #1-18,20-25 VF+ $690; Batman #1 appFN $8,625, #28,33,38,40,42 (Big Apple copies) VF+ $4,600; Blackhawk #10,11,12,15 (Big Apple copies) VF+ $3,220;

Captain America #1 appVF $11,500, #53,54 (Big Apple copies) VF+ $2,300, #75 (White Mountain copy) VF- $1,495; Comic Cavalcade #1 (Mile High copy) VF $8,050, #5 (Mile High copy) NM- $1,725, #8 (Mile High copy) NM $1,840, #18,21,22 (Big Apple copies) VF+ $1,265; Crime Suspenstories #1-27 (Gaines File copies) NM $13,800; Daredevil #1-16 VF $978, #17-80 VF $437; Daredevil Battles Hitler #1 appFN- $805; Detective #31 (Big Apple copy) VG $3,220, #104,106,109 (Big Apple copies) VF+ $2,990; Dick Tracy Large Feature #4 &11 (Larson copies) FN $690; Exciting #45,46,48,50,57 (Big Apple copies) VF+ $2,530; Famous Funnies nn (w/envelope) FN

$5,175; Fantastic Four #2,6,9,14,16,17 FN $1,035; Flash #70 & 72 (Big Apple copies) VF+ $1,495, #106,107,108,110 (Big Apple copies) VF $3,220; Frontline Combat #1-15 (Gaines File copies) NM $4,830;

Green Lantern (GA) #18 & 19 (Big Apple copies) VF+ $1,725, #22,25,26,27 (Big Apple copies) VF+ $2,760; Haunt of Fear #1-28 (Gaines File copies) NM $17,250; Journey into Mystery #115-192 VF $748; Lone Ranger giveaway FN $2,185; Mad Comics #1-23 (Gaines File copies) NM $43,700; Mad Magazine #24-312 (Gaines File copies) NM $8,625; #24-312 (Gaines File copies) NM $11,500, #24-303 (Gaines File copies) NM $10,350; Marvel Mystery #70 & 77 (Big Apple copies) VF $1,380; Master Comics #1 FN $2,300; More Fun #67 FN- $1,495, #71 VG+ $690; #74,92,98,106 (Big Apple copies) FN $920,

NY World's Fair 1939 nn VG $2,300; Panic #1-5,7-12 (Gaines File copies) NM $3,680; Sgt. Fury #1-80 VF $805; Shock Suspenstories #1-18 (Gaines File copies) NM $10,350; Showcase #1-8 (Bound) FN $3,450, #34,35,36 FN $150; Startling #35,38-41,45,47,48 (Big Apple copies) VF $2,185; Strange Tales #101-183 VF+ $1,610; Superman #35,40,71 (Big Apple copies) VF+ $1,610; Tales to Astonish #1,4,6,7,11 FN $518, #27 VF+ $1,150; Tales/Crypt & Crime Patrol #15,16,17-46 (Gaines File copies) NM $34,500; Two-Fisted Tales #18-41 (Gaines File copies) NM $7,475; Uncle Sam Quarterly #1 VF+ $978; WDC&S #1 appVF $4,830; Weird Fantasy #1-22 (Gaines File copies) NM $17,250; Weird Science #1-22 (Gaines File copies) NM $20,700; Wonder Woman #14 & 18 (Big Apple copies) NM $2,070; World's Finest #8 & 20 (Big Apple copies) VF+ $2,990; Wow #1 (Big Apple copy) VG $1,725;

Original Art

Herriman Krazy Kat Specialty Piece (1933) $40,250; Herriman Krazy Kat original art Sunday page (1932) FN $6,325; Wrightson cover to Chamber of Darkness (1970) FN $2,300; Schulz Peanuts daily— 2/11/53 FN $3,220; 9/7/54 $2,070; Schulz Peanuts Sunday page VF $4,600; Taliafero Donald Duck dailies dated 11/2/43 & 10/28/43 VG $2,530; Gottfredson "Mickey Mouse in the Frozen North" watercolor (1982) $17,250, Gottfredson Mickey Mouse daily strip 7/21/38 VF $3,450; Gottfredson Mickey Mouse Sunday 7/10/38 $9,200;

Barks "Go Slowly Sands of Time" watercolor $6,325; Barks Jr. Woodchucks #12 three pages & pencil script (1971) FN $2,070; J.Severin Mad #5 original art 6 pgs "Miltie of the Mounties" FN $4,025; Infantino Detective #344 original cover art FN $8,050; Ingels Vault of Horror #39 original art 6 pgs. "All for Gnawt" FN $1,495; Buscema Astonishing Tales #2 cover art (1970) FN 920; Kirby Tales to Astonish #14 splash page (1960) FN 3,450; Kirby Fantastic Four #20 origina, art unpublished cover (1963) FN 14,950; Kirby/Ditko Amazing Spider-Man #8 original art six page story (1963) $20,700; McKay Dreams of the Rarebit Fiend original art (1907)) FN $2,070.

Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Seasoned hobbiests are acutely aware that prices vary based on geographic location, time of year, and other factors.

the beginnings of something great.

(Before the Update's release): Adventure #247 FR $95; Batman #181 NM $200, #189 NM $90; Brave & Bold #34 GD $148; Captain America #100 NM/MT- $245; Conan #1 VF/NM $110; Daredevil #1 FN $320; Green Lantern #2 GD $69; Hulk #5 GD $98, #102 NM $80; Iron Man & Sub Mariner #1 GD $35; Lois Lane #1 GD- $168; Mission Impossible #1 NM/NM+ $180; Secret Six #1 NM $64, #22 GD $350, #45 VG $50; Showcase #57 VF/NM $130; Star Trek #1 GD $60; X-Men #1 VG $675.

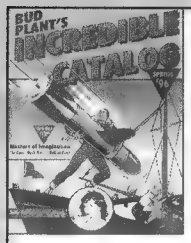
Bronze Age (1970-1979)

Records are being set everyday... which is not that amazing for books that languished in the bargain bins for twenty five years. But when a book Guides for $3.50 for the past twenty years and then sells for $135 in VG condition, then hobbyists get interested pretty quickly! As collectors flock to the early 1970's books, things tend to be a little crazy... and what was once "undesirable" and out of vogue is now in demand. Scarce (and cheap) funny animal books are sought after, especially Giant formats. Marvel is in demand if it is Atlas reprints, humor, romance or Westerns. Certain Gold Key and Charlton books are really in demand, and it's no secret how scarce 1970's books from these two publishers are. Failed DC titles are hot. "Variety" runs (DC 100 pg Super Spectaculars, Super DC Giants) can go for more than $50 each in grade! Marvel etcetera is also hot.

Sales: Adventure #431 NM $32, #439 NM $12; All Star Western #11 VF $40; Amazing Spider-Man #102 NM $50; Batman #234 VG $12; Batman Family #1 NM $10; Brave & Bold #99 NM $22; Cerebus #1 VF $390; DC 100 pg Super Spectacular #20 VF $35; Dr. Strange #1 NM $28; Ghost Rider #1 VF/NM $40; Green Lantern #89 NM $40; Hulk #181 NM $550; Laurel and Hardy #1 FN $18; Li'l Kids #12 NM $15; Marvel 2 in 1 NM $34; New Gods #9 NM $18; Peter the Pest #3 GD $8; Ringo Kid #1 NM $14; Secret Origins #1 NM $14; Star Spangled War Stories #154 GD $9; Super DC Giant #16 VG $38; Swamp Thing #1 GD $8; Unknown Soldier #205 NM $12; X-Men #94 GD $60.

Traditionally this is the quiet time of year for comics (on most fronts), but this year's exceptions are Mark Wilson's Rockford collection, Dan Greenhalgh's new high grade find, the non-stop frenzy for post-Golden Age books, and the record setting sales of certain early Bronze Age material (in mid and high grades)... low key, it really isn't.

But in spite of the exceptions above, the traditional slow months before the Spring are still great buying opportunities for collectors. Dealers are looking for convention inventory and often have more money to purchase books than in the Spring. Holiday money, bonuses and tax refunds are often spent during the next three months. Savvy collectors know all this and use it to their advantage.



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(Continued from page 80)

ership. Then the cost of comics really began to spiral upward all during the '70s, seemingly out of control.

Not since the early 1950s had the comic book industry seen such dark days. Fundamental changes would be necessary if the medium was to survive. Out of this chaotic environment, a new kind of comic emerged, a comic that would lend itself more to the realities of life than to worlds of fantasy.

As the Silver Age began to wane, a new series appeared which would prove to be the harbinger of things to come. With the introduction of Deadman in *Strange Adventures* #205 (October 1967) the notion that comics were a limited medium suited only as entertainment for kids would begin to change.

Right from the start it was apparent that Deadman had potential. Probably the most unusual comic book hero ever conceived, Boston Brand was dead. Rama Kushna, the "Face of the Universe," tells Boston "Deadman" Brand, "you shall have the power to walk among men until you have found the one who killed you." To better enable our hero in the accomplishment of his goal, Rama Kushna gives him the ability to possess and gain complete control over the body of any person.

Unlike most heroes, Deadman didn't fight for truth, justice, and the American way. He existed only to track down his murderer, that his soul might finally rest. He didn't seek to battle super villains, aliens, or mad scientists. Deadman simply opposed evil when and where he found it, on the way to completing the task set before him. On his quest, Deadman ran up against assorted 'real world' villains involved in plausible situations. The subject matter of this series was groundbreaking in many ways. Instead of a wild ride through a fantasy world, Deadman strove to show us what would happen if this character really existed. An unusual premise and realistic scripting weren't the only elements that made this series revolutionary. The strip also showcased the first mature work of Neal Adams, an artist who would become the most influential in the field during the Bronze Age.

His first regular assignment, Deadman was a canvas Adams would use to express his considerable talent. Excelling in all aspects of illustration, Adams wasn't your typical comic book artist. His ability to capture every detail and a solid grasp of what it takes to tell a story with pictures combined with experimental layouts to propel a script along. To put it simply, Neal Adams had a quasi-realistic style that was unprecedented.

DC had broken with all tradition. Rather than condescend to the juvenile audience, the men behind Deadman dared to create a comic at their own level. Fans were quick to praise this new development. Marvel had pioneered comics for older adolescent readers by instilling their heroes with individual characterization and emotionalism. Now, DC had done Marvel one better by, in the words of one letter writer, producing the "first adult comic in history."

Like many others during this time Deadman wasn't a commercial success. It did, however, succeed in expanding the medium. The door was opened to push the envelope and explore new ground.

A multitude of talented newcomers found their way into comics during the Bronze Age. Even though this period is best described as a time of mediocrity, there were many points of brilliance. Not just the classics like Green Lantern/Green Arrow and Conan, but also many lesser acclaimed series that were well-conceived and tightly crafted such as Master of Kung-Fu by Paul Gulacy and Doug Moench, Aquaman by Jim Aparo and Steve Skeates, Manhunter by Walter Simonson and Archie Goodwin, plus many more.

Perhaps the reason the Bronze Age is sometimes looked upon with disdain by collectors is that it didn't include, generally speaking, a revitalization of mainstream superhero comics. The new creators coming into the field wanted to explore new frontiers, to bring their own visions to life. The end of the Silver Age was marked by a decline in popularity of the superheroes. Superman, Spider-Man, and their kind were "old hat" by the standards of many, and no one really wanted to rehash what had gone before. As a result, DC and Marvel branched out into new and different genres.

Another problem was DC and Marvel's inability to keep the best new talents on the payroll. The brightest stars of this new generation refused to accept the entrenched corporate mindset toward creators and creators' rights. This gave new impetus to the fledgling independent movement, which began in 1967 with Wally Wood's *Witzend*. Management gradually changed their attitude when the realization came that artists and writers are the backbone of the industry.

By the late '70s, change was once again in the air. The Kinney Corporation had recently merged with Warner Communications and in 1976 Carmine Infantino was replaced with Jenette Kahn. Working with Joe Orlando as creative director and Dick Giordano as executive editor, Kahn oversaw a reorganization of DC. She built a reputation as someone who worked well with creators and proved to be open to creators' demands for new rights. Kahn was instrumental in bringing about contractual changes that improved the relationship between creators and publishers.

A reorganization of Marvel also began during this time. Jim Shooter became editor-in-chief in 1978. He took firm control of the company, providing the kind of leadership Marvel had been lacking since the days of Stan Lee. Under Shooter many assistant editors were given full editor status and new editors were hired. This created a hierarchy similar to DC's more efficient multi-editor system.

These management shake-ups were due, in part, to a deluge of new titles turned out between 1975 and 1978, about 80% of which failed. Also, increasing distribution problems coupled with ever higher cover prices were making comics difficult to sell. This explosion of ill-conceived titles and subsequent implosion, as Kahn and Shooter culled the ailing, effectively marked the end of the Bronze Age period.

The Bronze Age was a time of expanding horizons and changing attitudes. An unheralded changing of the guard was taking place as the next generation took the helm. For the first time, comic fans were becoming creators. Comics were beginning to be taken seriously as a true art form. If not for certain persistent problems, the Bronze Age may have become the most explosively exciting period in comics history.

1967 was a pivotal year for several reasons, not the least of which was the debut of the landmark Deadman series. Like *Action* #1 and *Showcase* #4, I think Deadman represented the birth of a concept and gave rise to the kind of comic that characterized the Bronze Age.

I don't expect that everyone will agree with my views. I do hope to spark some lively debate on this topic in the pages of CBM Forum or Marketplace Mail. I began reading and collecting comics in the early '70s. Consequently, this era is my personal favorite and I'm interested to hear what others have to say.

No one argues the fact that the first appearance of Superman inaugurated the Golden Age. And, although there is still some contention on this point, the general consensus is that the first appearance of the modernized Flash was the beginning of the Silver Age. But, when was the Bronze Age? With the increase in demand for Bronze Age material, this question becomes pertinent once again.

Actually, some suggest there was no Bronze Age, that the Silver Age ran right through to the end of the 1970s. Others say the Silver Age ended and the Bronze Age began when comics went from 12¢ to 15¢ in mid 1969. Blanket statements such as these belie the reality and importance of what was taking place during this time, and I propose that the beginning of this new era isn't readily apparent. In fact I think that the end of the Silver Age and the start of the Bronze Age overlap and intertwine, based on several key events that help clarify what happened and when.

In the early 1960s, as the Silver Age gained momentum, renewed interest in comics gave birth to organized fandom. As the decade progressed, many of these fans became interested not only in reading and collecting comics, but creating them as well. In 1966 many of DC's personnel began to leave the industry. They left for various reasons, most of which either directly or indirectly connected to retirement. Gardner Fox, Bill Finger, Otto Binder, and others were involved in a dispute with DC brass over retirement benefits. They didn't get the benefits they sought, which only served to speed their exodus.

New talent was hired to fill gaping holes in DC's staff. Editor Mort Weisinger started the ball rolling in 1966 by hiring adult fan E. Nelson Bridwell, a 13-year old Jim Shooter, and Cary Bates, another young fan. By 1968 more teenage fans had joined them, including Marv Wolfman, Mike Friedrich, and Len Wein. DC began hiring new blood out of necessity and Marvel, in an effort to expand its line, was doing the same.

In 1967 DC's sales started to drop. Marvel's, on the other hand, were at an all-time high. Marvel, too, would soon find its sales sagging, but in the meantime, Stan Lee and Martin Goodman felt the time was right for expansion. Marvel first added to their staff, then to their line of comics. Lee paralleled Weisinger in 1966 by hiring adult fan Roy Thomas as his assistant. Soon John Buscema, John Romita, Archie Goodwin, Jim Steranko, Barry Smith, and Gary Friedrich joined Marvel's bullpen. In the beginning, Marvel was seen to be Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and Steve Ditko, but that was changing. Ditko left in 1966 and Kirby went to work for DC in 1970. Meanwhile, Roy Thomas became a powerful presence at Marvel. In 1971, when Lee took Martin Goodman's place as publisher, Thomas became editor-in-chief. The changing personnel at both DC and Marvel would have the same results. Not only would there be an influx of new and differing talent, but an infusion of new ideas and visions that would have an impact on the medium as a whole.

Another string of changes was taking place behind the scenes at DC during this time. When

the Kinney Corporation became the newest owner of DC they knew something had to be done about slumping sales. For years DC's editors had such differing editorial styles that essentially DC functioned as a group of smaller companies under one roof. The new management felt that this needed to be changed and that the creative end of the company should be placed under the control of one man. (This was no surprise when you consider Marvel's success under the guidance of Stan Lee.) The choice, however, was somewhat unorthodox. Instead of an editor or writer... an artist, Carmine Infantino, became the new editorial director.

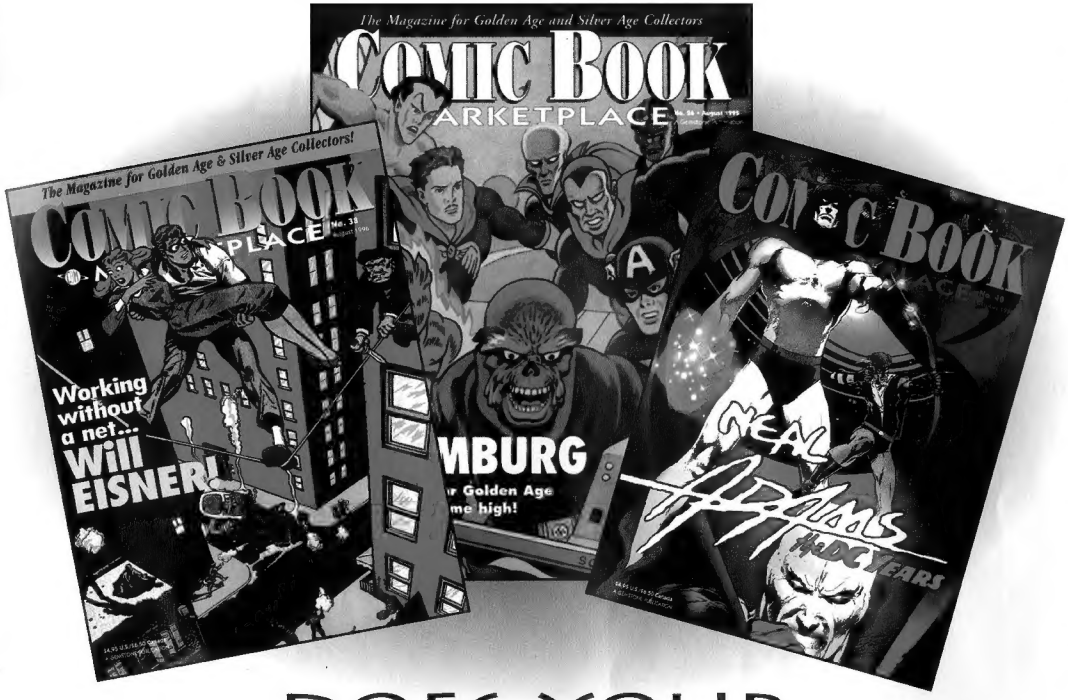
Perhaps the new owners showed great insight in choosing him, a man whose mind was geared toward the creative rather than the business end of the company. If so, it was both a success and a failure, for Infantino was open to innovation and experimentation, but, in my opinion, gave DC no clear direction.

The first significant action taken by Infantino was the hiring of four new editors. All of these editors were fellow artists; longtime DC artists Joe Kubert and Mike Sekowsky, former EC artist Joe Orlando, and Dick Giordano. Giordano had been executive editor at Charlton Comics. He brought with him from Charlton ex Marvel superstar Steve Ditko and four up and coming creators; Pat Boyette, Steve Skeates, Jim Aparo, and Denny O'Neil.

Although the idea was to unify the DC universe, most feel that Infantino never developed a "house style" similar to Marvel's, and in retrospect, perhaps this was for the best. DC's new approach to editorial control evolved into something of a hybrid of both the DC and Marvel styles of the '60s. Infantino oversaw and had final say so over each editors' titles, but he gave them the freedom to develop a style and niche of their own.

The Marvel style that developed at the end of the Silver Age was based on the work of Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Stan Lee, and Roy Thomas. At first, this elaboration on and unification of the Marvel mythos worked well, but it would soon grow out of vogue and sales would decline. Some Marvel artists and writers have said they felt "forced" to fit their work into a constraining Marvel mold.

The late '60s and early '70s was indeed a tumultuous time. Not only was the comic book industry experiencing a decline in sales and personnel shake-ups, but the general mood of the country was changing as deep concerns over civil rights, womens' liberation, and the Vietnam war were reaching critical mass. The economics of comic book publishing were also changing. Comics had always been a cheap form of entertainment. A price increase, from 10¢ to 12¢, during the height of the Silver Age was strain enough on young wallets. There was another increase in 1969... and considering what was going on in the culture, I feel it was extremely ill timed and was almost certainly a factor in further reducing comic read- *(Continued on page 79)*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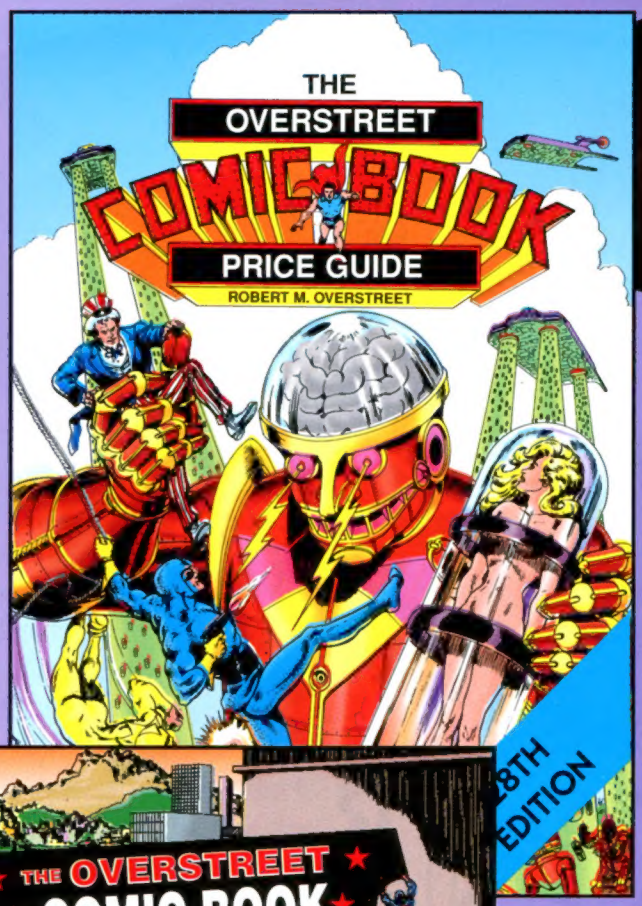

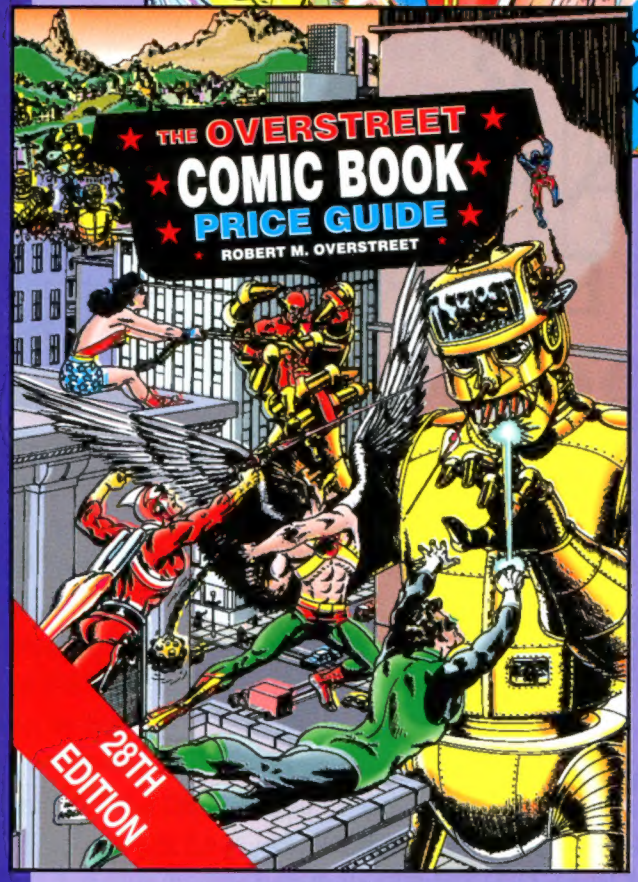

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